

ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT  
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

MEMORANDUM

AUGUST 31, 2011

TO: PRINCIPALS  
SPECIAL EDUCATION AND RELATED SERVICES  
ADMINISTRATORS, STAFF AND TEACHERS

FROM: CINDY ANDERSON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
SPECIAL EDUCATION



SUBJECT: DISTRICT REPRESENTATIVE

***What is the District Representative role with the IEP team?***

A District Representative must be in attendance at all IEP meetings. This duty falls on the principal unless a designee is appointed by the principal to function as the District Representative.

***Who can serve as a District Representative?***

The following criteria must be considered when appointing a teacher to act as District Representative for the Anchorage School District. According to the state special education handbook, the appointee must be:

- A. *Qualified to provide, or supervise the provision of special education.*
- B. *Knowledgeable about the general education curriculum.*
- C. *Knowledgeable about the availability of resources in the District with the authority to commit district resources and ensure that whatever services set out in the IEP will be provided.*

Based on the above criteria only another administrator, special education teacher or related service provider can be assigned to act as District Representative.

***What is the role of the District Representative at the ESER, IEP, manifestation or other special education meeting?***

In the event of a unanimous decision, it is the District Representative's responsibility to:

- 1. Insure that all team members have fully participated in the discussion
- 2. Insure that the parent's requests are directly responded to by other team members
- 3. Identify consensus of the team
- 4. Review the Prior Written Notice

*What is the District Representative role in the event of a disagreement among team members?*

While an overwhelming majority of IEP teams agree throughout the entire IEP development and revision meeting, there are rare events where there is a disagreement between team members. Such disagreements occur most between school professionals and parent requests. In the event of a disagreement it is the responsibility of the district representative to:

1. Insure that all team members have fully participated in the discussion
2. Insure that the parent's requests are directly responded to by other team members
3. Identify consensus of the team after providing each team member an opportunity to discuss the issue.
4. Insure that the Prior Written Notice addresses the topic of disagreement and succinctly captures the team consensus

*What is consensus?*

Generally the term "consensus" references unanimity in decision-making. Courts and the U.S. Department of Education (OSEP) indicate that "consensus" in special education decisions is defined as "majority" rather than "unanimity". The District Representative must be sure that he or she has heard each team members' opinion on the topic of concern.

Both courts and OSEP warn against "taking a vote" as the team is genuinely supposed to engage in an interactive conversation; however, for practical purposes the District Representative generally is guided to insure a caucus occurs before "declaring" the consensus of the team and moving the team onto the next item of the agenda.

*Must the District Representative stay for the entire meeting?*

**The District Representative role cannot be excused or waived by the parent prior to the meeting.**

The allocation of district resources is embedded in the identification of services and placement – both decisions made in the final moments of an IEP meeting. In order to make informed decisions, including consensus and allocation of district resources, the District Representative is to be in attendance **for the entire meeting.**

There have been court decisions that indicate a District Representative's absence, even for part of the meeting, undermined the entire meeting and school teams have been ordered to reconvene meetings.

**Additional Considerations:**

It is strongly recommended that an administrator attend any meetings where staff or parents have concerns or there have been issues at prior meetings. An administrator should attend any manifestation determination meeting.