

# THE AWESOME IEA Podcast

## Episode 4: How the IEA Representative Assembly Works

K: *Welcome* to the AWESOME IEA Podcast brought to you by the Illinois Education Association.

D: The podcast for curious well-informed association members.

K: I'm one of your hosts, Kelsey Harms, a Computer Specialist from the IEA Program Development Department.

D: And I'm Diana Zaleski, one of your Instructional Resource and Professional Development Directors from IEA Teaching and Learning.

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

D: Today we are going to discuss the IEA Representative Assembly with our special guest Robin Ehrhart, IEA Director of Program Development. Robin, thank you so much for being with us today.

R: I'm happy to. Thanks for the invitation to join you today.

D: So, let's jump right in. Can we start off with just a quick overview of what the IEA Representative Assembly, or RA is?

R: Sure, the Representative Assembly is an annual meeting where over 1200 IEA delegates and members come together in a democratic process to deliberate and vote on policy for IEA. They also vote on rules for governing the Association, resolutions for the organization and new business items as well. It's a very interesting event which gives direction to IEA.

K: So, Robin, what is the process for becoming a delegate to the RA?

R: Delegates to the RA are the results of elections that held at their local region level. Back in October, members nominated themselves or other members to attend. Those nominations were due mid-November and then the elections were held in December of 2017 for the 2018 IEA-RA attendees.

D: When is this year's IEA Representative Assembly?

R: Actually, it's a great question, it's being held this week! The RA is running from April 19<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> at the Hyatt O'Hare in Rosemont IL. There will be a Board of Directors meeting on Wednesday prior to the RA in the evening. Thursday morning will begin with a combination of Open Hearings and Professional Development sessions. The first business session will actually begin Thursday, April 19<sup>th</sup> at 2pm. The RA will end on Saturday, April 20<sup>th</sup>.

K: So, Robin, do delegates typically stay at the hotel the event is held in? What sort of transportation or other accommodations are available for delegates?

R: Delegates will typically stay at the Hyatt O'Hare but we will have some delegates commuting. Many folks drive to the RA and park onsite, some will commute via the Metra train, while others take Amtrak to Union Station in Chicago. For those taking Amtrak, IEA will be providing a shuttle from Union Station to the hotel.

For those staying in the hotel, delegates could choose from different room types. They can choose single rooms, double rooms, triples or quads, and some of our regions have even booked suites so they can have region meetings in them.

D: Robin, I know there are items that typically happen each year at the RA, can you give us an idea of what those things are?

R: Well there are actually several items that happen at the RA. So, every year there are proposed bylaw changes, which are the documents that establish rules for governing the association. Several proposals are already available online at the Members' Only site, but there is time for people to make proposals from the floor. Any proposals made from the floor will need a 3/4<sup>th</sup> vote to be approved. A second area is related to IEA Resolutions which are opinions, intentions or positions of IEA. There will be time on the agenda to look at our Resolutions, and time is allowed for proposals to be made. Another area will be around the Legislative Committee's work. The Legislative Committee will have some suggested changes to the legislative platform which provides IEA with legislative positions. Again, there is time for proposals to be submitted from the floor. New business items will be brought to the delegation to discuss and vote on as well. All of these items that I just mentioned, the bylaws, the legislative committee, the resolutions and the new business items will all be voted on by the body.

This year, we've also changed the agenda up a bit in terms of the open hearings and the professional development sessions. We changed them so that half of the open hearings will run at the same time as the professional development sessions, and then we duplicated that during another time slot. This way, Delegates can attend 2 open hearings, 2 PD sessions, or 1 of each. This was an effort to allow delegates to earn more PD credit if they wanted. Also during the RA there are going to be several awards will be given out, we will hear reports from officers and from our Executive Director along with some elections on Saturday for NEA Director Positions.

K: So, Robin, that sounds like a ton of information for delegates to keep track of. How do they stay in the loop or what keeps them up-to-date?

R: So, delegates are kept up-to-date in a couple of different ways. They have a master agenda that is going to show everything that is going on at the RA. They also have information that comes to them through their region chairs. So, their region chairs are kept up-to-date as we get closer to the RA in the Board's News You Can Use and we divide that into two sections. There's information for the region chairs, but then there is information that we ask them to forward to their delegates. So, we sent a letter to delegates the second week in April that outlines highlights of things they need to remember when they come to the RA.

K: Awesome. Can you take us through the process of how someone might submit a new business item? What happens, how does it get before the body, and what happens before/after they vote on the item?

R: Sure, a delegate wishing to submit a New Business Item or an NBI as they are often referred to, must fill out the appropriate form and submit it to the parliamentary assistance table at the front of the room. There are assistants there to help you understand the process. The maker of the New Business Item is required to be recognized at a microphone and move the item. The New Business Item will be printed for all delegates to review and the text will be shown on the screens for the delegation to see and it will then be open for debate.

During the debate of a New Business Item, anyone wishing to speak to the motion will use a card system to indicate how they wish to speak. A green card is for speaking in favor of the motion while the red card is against. A yellow card is used to request more information while a white card is used for a point of order. The entire meeting will be conducted using Robert's Rules of Order. There are signs to help you understand which color of card to use.

D: Do delegates meet with their regions to discuss these items?

R: Regions have time during the meeting days to hold region caucus meetings to discuss their thoughts on proposals at the RA. They might discuss proposed bylaw changes, legislative platform changes or even share information that they learned at the Open Hearings or Professional Development sessions.

K: Robin, can you give us a short explainer on the budget process? I've heard that the budget gets passed at the RA, can you just help us understand how that works?

R: Certainly, last year at the IEA-RA, a 2-year budget was approved. This year there are some proposed adjustments to the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of the budget. The IEA Budget Committee met to determine adjustments to this 2<sup>nd</sup> year and brought those to the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors transmitted these adjustments to members through the Budget Open Hearings that were held the last week in February. The IEA Budget Committee reviewed the results of the Open Hearings and decided on any additional adjustments to present to the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors voted to recommend the adjustments and this set of budget adjustments will be presented to the IEA Representative Assembly for approval and adoption this week.

D: This event sounds like a huge undertaking, can you share how many staff, and what departments or teams work together to make each RA successful?

R: Sure Diana. This event really is an organization-wide effort. Every department at IEA has some role in putting the RA together, making it a successful event. There will be 76 staff and officers present at the RA and a whole lot of teamwork went into to making this happen. We also have some 64 members have volunteered to be RA Assistants who help us out as well.

K: Robin, I've seen RA assistants when I've been to the RA in the past, can you discuss who they are and what they are assigned to do?

R: RA Assistants volunteer to help at the RA. Some have positions monitoring entrances to the RA floor to ensure only people with floor privileges enter. We have volunteers working the charging stations and the information desk. Some are also helping to distribute materials while others run materials from the workroom to the RA floor. We have assistants helping with the Elections and the IEA Foundation and SCORE grant tables. There are also assistants that specifically work the front of the room. Those assistants serve as spotters to help identify delegates at microphones, keep time, work as parliamentary assistants, and assist with credentials. Again, a lot of folks come together to make this happen.

D: It sounds like the RA is a lot of business, but I know there are a lot of events delegates can attend. Can you talk about what sort of entertainment is available?

R: The RA will have student performers throughout the event. After hours we have a few groups holding receptions to provide networking opportunities for delegates. The local presidents are having a reception on Wednesday, while our ESP delegates and our Early Career Teachers are having receptions

on Friday. Often regions will schedule group dinners and many will attend the Friday night entertainment in the hotel which this year is a DJ with Karaoke.

K: So, Robin, do you have any tips or advice to share with someone who is attending their first RA?

R: Sure Kelsey. Delegates should be sure to review the delegate handbook and agenda to make sure you are aware of the daily events, bring a sweater as the temperature in the room can fluctuate quite a bit, remember we have a charging station available for your phones and tablets, but you have to bring your cord. And we also have a selection of exhibitors for delegates to check out.

D: I've heard there is a scholarship basket raffle, can you explain?

R: In the exhibit area there will be around 40 baskets that were donated with the proceeds going to the SCORE grants. The SCORE (Schools and Community Outreach by Educators) Grants are used to encourage early career members and their local associations to collaborate and create opportunities for community service projects or school projects.

K: Robin, this really sounds like a busy week for our IEA RA delegates! Thanks so much for helping us understand the Representative Assembly! Remember if you have any questions, comments, or feedback, please check out the contact section on the Podcast page of the IEA Website.

D: We will also post some helpful links about the IEA Representative Assembly in the show notes section on the Podcast Page. Be sure to follow IEA on Facebook and Twitter to get live updates from the 2018 IEA RA.

K: Thanks so much for being a member, and thanks for joining us!