

WISCA

Watson Institute Social Center for Academic Achievement

Student Handbook 2023-2024



Welcome!

The Administration and Staff of The Watson Institute's WISCA Program extend a welcome to each family and student and thank you in advance for your support throughout the school year. Please read this handbook carefully. It provides important information relative to the policies and procedures of The Watson Institute's WISCA program. If you have any questions concerning this handbook, please call the office at either site for clarification.

WISCA Sewickley

301 Camp Meeting Road
Sewickley, PA 15143

Phone: 412-741-1800
Fax: 412-741-2454

WISCA Bridgeville

230 Hickory Grade Road
Bridgeville, PA 15017

Phone: 412-914-8800
Fax: 412-914-2059

WISCA Sharpsburg

200 Linden Ave.
Sharpsburg, PA 15215

Phone: 412-781-1708
Fax: 412 781-1561

School Hours (all locations): 8:40 AM – 2:40 PM

Frequently Called Numbers

WISCA Sewickley

Main Office	412-749-6400
Main Office Fax	412-741-2454
Program Director: Jennifer Do	412 781-1708
Lead Nurse: Susan Rosko	412-749-2808
Nurse's Fax	412-749-6499

WISCA Bridgeville

Main Office	412-914-8800
Main Office Fax	412-914-2059
Program Director: Jennifer Do	412-781-1708
WISCA Supervisor: Jennifer Dixon-Wagner	412-914-8800
Lead Nurse: Susan Rosko	412-914-8811
Nurse's Fax	412-221-4353

WISCA Sharpsburg

Main Office	412-781-1708
Main Office Fax	412 781-1561
Program Director: Jennifer Do	412-781-1708
WISCA Supervisor: Lauren Casselberry	412-749-6444
Lead Nurse: Jennifer Miller	412 781-1708
Nurse's Fax	412 781-2739

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Overview

Please feel free to call at any time with questions. Teachers are mostly available for phone calls between 8-8:30 AM and between 3-4 PM. Teachers might not answer the phone during the school day so that instruction is not interrupted. Please leave a voicemail and your call will be returned as soon as possible. If there is an urgent message, ask for Jennifer Do or the building's WISCA Supervisor and the message will be relayed to the classroom immediately.

Attendance

Attendance Policy

State law requires that students be in school for 180 days each school year. Coming to school is very important for helping students learn and feel better.

The Watson Institute Rev. 12/1/2022

What if my child misses school for a day or two? If your student is absent, you must send us a written excuse when your child comes back to school. The parent or guardian must write, call or email after each absence. The excused absence must be for a legitimate reason. All absences are considered unexcused unless written notice is received.

Additionally, WISCA excuses a maximum of ten (10) days of cumulative absences verified by parental notification shall be permitted during a school year. All absences beyond ten (10) cumulative days shall require an excuse from a licensed medical practitioner.

In addition, PA has enacted new state legislation regarding school attendance. Truancy is now defined as an accrument of three (3) unexcused absences per current academic year. These absences do not need to run consecutively. Letters will be sent home after a student's first unexcused absence. After the third unexcused absence, the parents/guardians will be notified and, as required by law, the school will schedule a meeting to develop and discuss an Attendance Improvement Plan in hopes of raising your student's attendance.

If a student accrues 6 or more unexcused absences per current academic year, they will be considered habitually truant. If the child is habitually truant (accumulates six unexcused absences):

Habitually truant child under fifteen years of age: The school must refer the child to either: (1) refer the child to a school-based or community-based attendance improvement program or (2) the county CYS for services or possible disposition as a dependent child under the Juvenile Act. Additionally, the home school may file a citation against the parent of a habitually truant child under fifteen in a magisterial district court.

Habitually truant child fifteen years of age and older: If a habitually truant child is fifteen or

older, the school must either: (1) refer the child to a school based or community-based attendance improvement program or (2) file a citation against the student or parent in a magisterial district court. If these steps are not effective the school may refer the child to the county CYS agency for possible disposition as a dependent child

- When a student is absent, arrives late, or has an early dismissal, we need to have a written excuse on file.
- The excuse can be in the form of a written note or email.

Below is a sample Watson excuse for you to use if you would prefer. This will also be posted on the website and added to The Student Handbook.

If you have any questions, please contact Jennifer Do at jenniferdo@thewatsoninstitute.org or 412-741-1800, ext. 6444.



STUDENT EXCUSE FORM

Please complete and return to your child's teacher

Student Name: _____

Date/Time of Absence: _____

Reason: _____

Date/Time of Late Arrival: _____

Reason: _____

Date/Time Early Dismissal _____

Reason: _____

Parent Signature: _____

Date: _____

Arrival Procedures

Upon arrival, students will turn in any technology (see Technology Use and Electronics) to be locked away in a secure cabinet.

Students' bags will be opened by staff and checked; any items not permitted at school will be removed and locked away. Items will be returned at the end of the day to take home, UNLESS an item is deemed unsafe; in that case, a parent will be asked to come to pick up the item from the school.

Students will be checked with a metal detector wand; if metal is detected, students may be asked to empty and turn out their pockets or remove jackets before entering the building.

Student Drop-off and Pick-up

Please let us know if your child will not be arriving to school on the bus or if you are planning to pick your child up from school. To avoid the bus lane traffic and for the safety of all of our students, **you must park in the parking lot at all locations.**

Parking – Sharpsburg location

WISCA Sharpsburg parking is directly across the street from the staff parking lot. Please accompany your child to the main entrance door and ring the doorbell. A staff member will come to the door. It is easiest to turn up 12th Street and make a left onto Penn St. due to the one-way streets in Sharpsburg. During school hours, do not park in the lot right next to the school. Due to the bus traffic in this lot, cars are often blocked in for up to ½ hour at a time. For your safety and the safety of all children, **DO NOT** attempt to back up or squeeze around buses. The Sharpsburg Police have asked that no passenger cars from the school park along Sharpsburg streets when dropping off or picking up students. Please do not park in front of our neighbors' houses to wait for your child.

Parking – Bridgeville and Sewickley locations

We request that parents pull into numbered parking spaces and then call into the office. A staff person will then come to the vehicle and transition the students into the building. This procedure would also occur at the end of the day for transition home.

Technology Use and Electronics

Cell Phones and Electronic Devices

We strongly suggest that cell phones and any electronic devices, including but not limited to laptops, tablets, handheld games, or any recording devices, smartwatches, Bluetooth headphones, etc. be left at home. If a student brings an electronic device to school, it will be turned in to staff upon arrival and placed in an individual cubby slot in a locked closet at all times. The student will not have access to their devices during the day and the device will not

be returned until students leave the building for dismissal. If a student does not give up their device, they will be transitioned to a waiting area. Any individual plans/arrangements must be approved by classroom staff and program director and are subject to the student following school expectations.

Some transition aged students (18-21) have different expectations regarding electronics; these individual students will be provided the expectations to follow in their classrooms.

MP3 Players

WISCA allows students to use portable music players during the school day. Students may bring in their own MP3 player from home, or they may use WISCA-owned devices when available.

The following expectations apply:

MP3 Player provided by student:

- Student must remove headphones when requested by teacher
- Student must maintain focus on school work while listening
- MP3 cannot have a feature that allows for taking pictures
- MP3 cannot have a feature that allows for recording or watching videos
- MP3 cannot have any game features
- MP3 player cannot at any time be plugged into the WISCA computers
- Music cannot be shared with other students

MP3 Player provided by WISCA:

WISCA has a limited number of MP3 players for use by students. These are available by student request to a teacher or therapist on a first-come, first-serve basis. The following must be completed to utilize the WISCA MP3 player.

- Student must sign the Agreement and provide WISCA with a list of up to 10 requested songs
- Parent must sign a permission form and approve the requested music
- WISCA Behavior Specialist or Supervisor must approve the requested music
- Student must remove headphones or put away MP3 player when requested by teacher
- Student must maintain focus on school work while listening
- Music cannot be shared with other students
- MP3 player must remain at WISCA (does not go home) and additional music cannot be added without permission of parent and WISCA Behavior Specialist
- MP3 players that are damaged or destroyed, intentionally or due to carelessness or misuse, will not be replaced by WISCA

WISCA Student Technology Agreement

Computers are property of the Watson Institute; therefore, the following rules apply:

- My activity is constantly monitored through the use of Impero.
 - Attempts to access unapproved websites are logged – repeatedly attempting to access unapproved websites will result in a computer violation.
 - I will not attempt to disable or “get around” Impero blocks or monitoring.
- Only related schoolwork items may be saved on WISCA computers. Random “purges” of non-academic materials will take place outside of school hours.
 - If I would like to save creative projects, I must talk to my classroom staff FIRST to get permission. This should then be printed sent home to be accessed from my home devices and should not remain on school computers for more than a few days.
- I may not install or uninstall ANY programs or software on WISCA computers. I may not plug in personal devices, flash drives, or technology accessories to WISCA computers.
- I may not tamper with or change the code on my programs, home screen, desktop, or browsers, regardless of whether it causes permanent damage (this includes “inspect element” to change the text on webpages).
- I will not eat or drink from open containers at the computer.
- During academic time, I am only on Peak or other curriculum sites.
- I will physically respect WISCA property and not damage or destroy WISCA technology – aggressive behavior toward technology or intentional damage will result in a more severe consequence.
- If I will not transition to the classroom schedule or if I will not get off the computer when asked, within 2 prompts, restrictions will take place.
- All of my classwork must be completed at my expected pace.
- I use clean, non-offensive, and school-appropriate language while on the WISCA computers, including in Microsoft Teams messaging.
- I am only permitted to print in black and white and with staff permission.

I have reviewed the above material and agree to these expectations.

Date: _____

User Signature: _____

I have reviewed the above material with the above-named student.

Date: _____

Signature: _____

We ask that families review this policy with their child and teaching teams will review this policy with their students. If the Agreement is violated, an infraction system is in place:

1st Offense/Level 1:

- Computer disengaged for at least remainder of the school day (may include following day if infraction occurred in the afternoon)
- Work completed offline
- Probationary successful completion attained when teacher deems appropriate behavior has taken place, and work has been completed

2nd offense/Level 2:

- Loss of computer for at least 5 consecutive days
- Work completed offline
- Family/caregivers notified
- Successful completion attained when teacher deems appropriate behavior has taken place and work has been completed

3rd offense/Level 3:

- Loss of computer access for at least 2 weeks
- Work completed offline
- Family/caregivers notified
- Successful completion attained when teacher deems appropriate behavior has taken place and work has been completed

4th offense/Level 4

- Loss of computer for at least 4 weeks or remainder of academic quarter
- Work completed offline
- Family/caregivers notified
- Successful completion attained when teacher deems appropriate behavior has taken place and work has been completed

** Unsafe or aggressive behavior with WISCA technology or intentional damaging of WISCA technology is considered a serious infraction and will result in movement directly to at least 2nd Offense infraction level. If access is restored and if damage to computer did not render it unusable/unsafe, the student will continue to use that computer. If the computer is unusable, the student will not regain computer access until requirements are met *and* a replacement is available.

** Depending on the level and nature of the infraction, a meeting with the student's family and school district may be called before computer access is restored at the discretion of the classroom team and Behavior Specialist.

** For students using laptops (HIGH SCHOOL ONLY), if a student is not completing work, is eating or drinking while on the computer, or has caused damage/alterd the computer in any way, the student will cease use of the laptop immediately and lose laptop privileges for the remainder of the school year.

Academics

Curriculum

WISCA uses the Fuel Education Curriculum (www.getfueled.com). Students with online classes can access their curriculum from home at any time by going to <https://peak.getfueled.com>. Teaching teams will supply families with information regarding how to access your child's progress and curriculum online. WISCA strongly encourages families to access this content to follow your child's progress.

Supplemental Curriculum

Based on academic need, some students are enrolled in offline curriculum for some or all of their classes.

Primary Elementary Curriculum

Students in grades 1-5 will be using offline curriculum for Language Arts (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt's Journeys Series) and Math (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt's Go Math).

Graduation Credits

High school students (grades 9 and up) will follow their school district's plan for graduation. This is usually available on the district website. School districts set the number of credits needed for their students to graduate. **If a student does not earn the required credits at the end of the school year, they do not move into the next grade.** One semester course is worth $\frac{1}{2}$ (.5) credit. Two semester courses are worth 1 full credit. Students earn credits from classes from the Fuel Education curriculum and supplemental curricula as planned by the classroom teacher.

Some additional WISCA activities can also earn High School credit:

Physical Education twice per week. Students earn $\frac{1}{4}$ (.25) credit for the entire school year. Each student is assigned to a Physical Education period for exercise and physical activities at least twice a week. Students are responsible for logging their physical activities.

Social Skills Group (Peace Club) twice per week (with ongoing assignments). Students earn 1 credit for the entire school year.

Community Based Vocational Exploration (CBVE) once per week. Students earn $\frac{1}{2}$ (.5) credit for the entire school year.

9th grade: 0 – 6 credits

10th grade: 7 – 12 credits

11th grade: 12 – 18 credits

12th grade: 18 or more credits (total number needed to graduate will be based on the home school district graduation requirements)

Each year there may be opportunities for students to take additional classes for credit as the schedule permits. Additional classes may include:

Peer Mentoring twice per week. Students earn .5 credit for an entire school year.

Transition/Early Reach twice per week for 1 semester. Students earn .25 credit for an entire school year.

Music once per week. Students earn .25 credit for an entire school year.

Art once per week. Students earn .25 credit for an entire school year.

Progress Reports

IEP goal progress reports, report cards, and attendance will be sent home and to school districts quarterly. Please review your child's report card to assess their credits acquired and required by the school district.

Community Experiences

Community Outings

Students are frequently scheduled to walk in the community. These walks are for physical education and for community-based instruction. Individual sensory needs and behavior are taken into consideration when planning these walks and some students may not walk every day. If a student chooses not to accompany the group on a walk, another assignment or activity will be given to them.

Meals

Lunches and Snacks – Sharpsburg location

All Sharpsburg students pack lunches – there is **no food service** at WISCA Sharpsburg. Students should bring a lunch, breakfast, and/or snack from home. **Food will be kept in lockers.** If there are items in your child's lunch that need to be kept cool, please include a freezer pack in the lunch box/bag. If your child likes to snack during the day, we ask that you send in snacks for your child. If your child has difficulty regulating themselves when they are hungry, teaching teams will alert parents if a snack may be helpful. Food should be sent in daily and anything that is not eaten will be sent home the same day. Please send in food that your child can manage as independently as possible. Students are responsible for cleaning up after themselves after lunch. **Please include any needed silverware or dishes** with your child's lunch. It is suggested that students bring a water bottle marked with his/her name.

Lunch Program – Sewickley and Bridgeville locations

Your child may purchase a lunch at school within the Sewickley or Bridgeville location at this time, or bring a lunch to school. If your child wishes to buy a drink to accompany the packed lunch, white or chocolate milk and juice are available at Sewickley and Bridgeville.

A menu for the month's lunches is sent home at the beginning of each month. The menu will show a main entree and an alternate entree for each day. You or your child should select one entree for each day you purchase a lunch. If your child does not have preferences marked on his/her menu, and a lunch is not sent in from home, the main entree will automatically be selected. The selection of meals for children on specific diets, such as chopped or special foods and drinks, will be made by the teacher, therapists, and you. Students who need a modified diet, (pureed, chopped, gluten free); will have one choice each day if they choose to buy their lunch. The food item, which is marked with an asterisk on the menu, is the only choice for that day for students on modified diets. **A form must be signed by a doctor to receive a modified diet. Please call the school office to request this for your child.**

Nut-Free Policy

All WISCA locations are nut free! Many of the students at Watson schools are severely allergic to peanuts and other nuts. There is a potential for serious consequences for these students if they are exposed to or have contact with such products. It is for this reason that we have implemented a policy asking everyone to refrain from bringing nuts or nut products (peanut butter, almond milk, etc.) into the school. We realize that many of our students enjoy items with peanut butter/nuts, etc., but the overall safety of all students is our priority. If a student brings in an item containing nuts or nut products, it will be put away apart from students and sent home in their lunchbox at dismissal. We appreciate your cooperation and support regarding this policy.

Additional Information

School Supplies

Students will be provided with binders, pocket folders, paper, and writing implements. Students may use school/classroom materials or bring in their own.

Lockers

Each student will be assigned a locker for personal belongings. Combination or key locks provided by the student must be approved by the Program Director or a WISCA supervisor. The teacher **must** have a copy of the combination or an extra key if a lock is used. WISCA staff will have the authority to enter the locker and go through any materials in the locker **at any time**.

Toys and Belongings

Personal toys, belongings, and other items should remain at home. Students are responsible for their own items. Some students do find some security in bringing special items to school. These toys/items will be kept in the teacher's locked cabinet or in the child's locker. This will help the students remain on task and be successful in completing their academic work. Special permission may be given for special sensory items to be kept in a student's individual work area. Absolutely no pets are allowed in the school building due to allergy and other safety issues.

Delays/Closings

School Delay/Closing

All families are enrolled in the E2Campus emergency call system. At this time, school delays and closings are announced through this system. Sometimes, WISCA will remain open when school districts have closed. It is at the parent's discretion and school district transportation on whether or not the child can be safely transported to school when WISCA remains open.

When there is a delay or closing due to weather, WISCA cannot offer remote learning; however, students may access their online learning accounts to complete coursework from home if desired.

Student Conduct

At WISCA, students are expected to follow classroom and school wide rules. Below are some situations that might require additional intervention from a student's team.

Disagreements and Conflict

Students are expected to use coping skills in settling differences with others. WISCA staff are present to support students in these matters. However, should fighting, hitting, slapping, or any form of physical aggression to another person (staff or student) occur, parents of students involved will be notified to discuss the incident and determine appropriate actions.

Property Destruction

Students can sometimes have a difficult time managing their emotions during a crisis. When these situations occur, we ask that students "repair" the situation by cleaning up messes made, fixing items that were broken, etc. The student is given options as well as support by staff to repair. Should a situation occur in which extensive damage has taken place, the student's family will be contacted.

Bullying/Harassment: Every student has the right to an education in a safe environment without being verbally or physically harassed or bullied. Violations to this will be subject to a meeting and the possibility of in-school suspension. Any student who believes he or she has been subject to harassment or bullying shall report all incidents to the Program Director, Site Supervisor, or any staff member. If the complaint is not immediately resolved, the Program Supervisor will review the matter with all involved.

School Bus Safety

Transportation is an extension of the school environment. Appropriate school bus safety is expected. Should difficulties arise on the school bus, students can be placed on behavior agreements for improvement. This will be the first level of warning. If additional steps are needed, a meeting with the student's family will take place.

Language

Students are expected to use school-appropriate language while at WISCA and in the community. Language expectations are established in each of our classrooms because staff and students find profanity and obscene language difficult to manage in their learning environment. Students will be reminded of language expectations in their classroom and their teaching teams will discuss with them privately if the situation escalates. Should further discussion ensue, the student's parents will be contacted to develop a plan to address school-appropriate language.

Weapons

The Watson Institute WISCA program, in an effort to keep everyone in our buildings and communities safe, does not permit students, non-students, staff, or visitors to possess or use a weapon on any of our campuses. "Weapon" is defined as "any knife, cutting instrument, cutting

tool, nun-chuck stick, firearm, shotgun, rifle and any other tool or implement capable of inflicting serious bodily injury.” Additionally, suspicious conduct of any sort will immediately be reported to the onsite WISCA Supervisor.

Should a student accidentally be in possession of a weapon, they will immediately give the weapon to WISCA staff. WISCA Staff will proceed to take it to the Supervisor on site, who will then contact the family. No further action will take place. Should a student intentionally possess and/or use a dangerous weapon, the Police will be notified immediately. An IEP meeting will be held to discuss should an incident occur and to determine additional steps.

Items from nature/outside that may not be classified as weapons typically but could be used as such (i.e., sticks or rocks from walks outside) will be at staff discretion.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity means valuing...

- **Honesty** – Students are honest about their academic work and do not lie to cover up how they completed their assignments.
- **Trust** – Teachers can trust that their students are doing their best and completing their work with integrity and honesty.
- **Respect** – Students show respect for their teachers and classmates by being honest and completing their work with integrity.
- **Fairness** – No one cheats to gain an unfair advantage on their academic work.
- **Learning** – Courses and assignments are meant to be about learning new things, not just about the grades or credits students receive.
- **Responsibility** – Students take ownership of their work and do their best to complete it on time, accurately, and with honesty.

Students at WISCA demonstrate academic integrity by...

- Completing academic work (lessons, quizzes, projects, papers, and tests) themselves, or with help from teachers or classmates when permitted
- Only using outside sources and materials to help when permitted
- Citing outside sources and materials that students use to help with assignments
- Being honest with teachers about how assignments are completed or what help was used to complete them
- Telling teachers if a student sees someone else cheating or violating the policy

Cheating is any behavior that is in direct opposition to academic integrity expectations. Some of these behaviors include...

- Looking up answers online or in a book without permission
- Using tools or technology for help without permission
- Turning in work someone else completed as your own
- Getting help from someone else without permission
- Letting someone else turn in your work as their own
- Copying information from outside sources without citing (plagiarism)

Consequences for cheating may include...

- Loss of access to WISCA technology for completing academics
 - Cheating on WISCA computers is considered a technology violation
- Having to re-do an assignment or assessment
- Notification of the course instructor that cheating was observed
- Reduction of grade on assignment or assessment

Dress Code

While WISCA accommodates a wide variety of individual tastes, there are some guidelines for school-appropriate dress:

- Clothing with text, slogans, or logos/emblems is acceptable as long as clothing does not depict...
 - Profanity or explicit language
 - Violence or weapons
 - Illegal substances, smoking, or alcohol
 - Sexualized imagery or references
 - Overly graphic or frightening imagery
- Warm-weather clothing is appropriate with the following exceptions: very short shorts or skirts (should be at least fingertip length), halter tops or tank tops with spaghetti straps, tops exposing the midriff or immodest display of undergarments.
- Items of dress that disrupt the educational process and climate are inappropriate. Some examples include distracting hats, bandanas, costumes, etc., unless for an approved activity.
- Footwear must be worn by all students. Flip flops and backless shoes are discouraged. Students will not be allowed to participate in gym classes without appropriate footwear. "Wheelie shoes" are not permitted.

Social Media

While we want to encourage our students to build friendships with their classmates during and after school hours, we are concerned with the emotional language, misunderstandings and inappropriate topics that can be shared on social media sites. Students are not allowed to share personal contact information with other students while at WISCA without expressed permission from both students' parents. WISCA recommends tight restrictions and monitoring by parents of the students' use of social media and other sites, apps, and games. WISCA students should not attempt to "add" or contact WISCA staff on social media or other sites, apps, or games.

Please sign and return this form as soon as possible. Thank you!

Student Handbook Form

I have reviewed the WISCA Student Handbook and understand the guidelines.

Student Signature: Jennifer Do

I have reviewed the WISCA Student Handbook with my child and understand the guidelines.

Parent Signature: _____