

PARENT HANDBOOK



THE WATSON INSTITUTE EDUCATION CENTER PROGRAMS



Welcome!

The Administration and Staff of The Watson Institute Education Center Programs extend a welcome to each family and student. We seek your support and encourage you to join our Partners-In-Education (PIE) group and volunteer for special events. Please read this handbook carefully. It provides important information relative to the policies and procedures of The Watson Institute Education Center Programs. If you have any questions concerning this handbook, please call the office at either site for clarification.

We are here to serve you and to provide the best teaching and learning for all students. Please advise us if we can provide any additional assistance. We strive to communicate through our main website, Microsoft Teams, e2campus, email, and periodic letters.

The Watson Institute Education Center Sewickley/Cupples Center
301 Camp Meeting Road
Sewickley, PA 15143

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

School Hours: 8:45 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
Office Hours: 7:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

The Watson Institute Education Center South
230 Hickory Grade Road
Bridgeville, PA 15017

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

School Hours: 8:45 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
Office Hours: 7:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

**By enrolling a child in the school, parents and guardians
acknowledge and agree to follow all policies.**

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Frequently Called Numbers

Education Center Sewickley/Cupples

Main Office	412-749-6400
Main Office Fax	412-741-2454
Program Director: April Kelm	412-749-2801
Lead Nurse: Susan Rosko	412-749-2808
Nurse's Fax	412-749-6499
Transportation: Main Office	412-749-6400
Educational Liaison: Meagan Trimbur	412-749-2805

Education Center South

Main Office	412-914-8800
Main Office Fax	412-914-2059
Program Director: Rayna Knox	412-914-8758
Lead Nurse: Susan Rosko	412-914-8811
Nurse's Fax	412-221-4353
Transportation: Main Office	412-914-8800
Educational Liaison: Meagan Trimbur	412-749-2805

WATSON INSTITUTE EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

MISSION

The Watson Institute helps children with special needs achieve their fullest potential in all aspects of their lives.

VALUES

Customer Focus

We will measure and respond quickly to the expectations and needs of our customers. Our interactions with our customers are based on principles of honesty, integrity, and partnership.

Excellence

We are committed to attaining the highest standards of professional practice and progressive delivery of services. Each of us, individually and in teams, shall anticipate, understand and surpass the expectations of our customers.

Integrity

We believe integrity is fundamental to everything we do. Integrity includes honesty, fairness, sensitivity, objectivity and confidentiality. Integrity is doing what we say we are going to do. It is vital to our success as a quality organization and also in our personal interactions.

Teamwork

We will work together in teams to achieve superior levels of customer and personal satisfaction. To promote teamwork, the organization will foster participation and encourage the sharing of knowledge with one another.

Innovation

We are committed to an environment that fosters new ways of thinking about what we do and how we do it. We encourage risk-taking and use our mistakes as learning opportunities. The organization provides resources to support appropriate innovation.

Significance of the Individual

We value each individual and his or her own contributions to the organization. We respect the rights and needs of individuals and encourage creativity and decision-making.

PROGRAMMING

Students enrolled at The Watson Institute Education Center Programs demonstrate significant needs in development and school achievement. Programming enables students to acquire the concepts, skills, behaviors, and attitudes necessary for reaching their potential in school, home, and the community setting.

Staff

The Watson Institute Education Center Programs employ a variety of certified and licensed professionals in the fields of special education, speech/language therapy, occupational and physical therapies, school social work, vision services, behavior intervention and nursing. Paraprofessionals actively assist the professional staff in the implementation of programming.

Transdisciplinary Teams

Classroom teams include a teacher, therapists, paraprofessionals, social workers and nurse. Throughout the year teams continually assess, plan, implement, and evaluate each student's program.

Related Services

The Watson Institute Education Center Programs offer an integrated therapy program of related services including occupational and physical therapies, vision, behavior, social work services, and speech/language therapy. Colleague consultation, which is designed to improve the skills of all staff, occurs routinely throughout The Watson Institute Education Center Programs. Because transferring new skills from isolated learning and practice situations to daily activities is challenging, therapeutic services are provided within the natural context of the classroom, community settings and, when appropriate, in a therapy room. Related services are defined by each child's IEP.

Evaluation

Evaluation may include any or all of the following components: record review, norm-referenced and criterion-referenced testing, standardized and non-standardized checklist, observations of performance, Watson curriculum checklists, and parental report. In determining the need for a related service, consideration is given to the outcomes of the evaluation as well as how the child functions on the environment.

Service Delivery

Integrated therapy is made up of direct therapy, monitoring, and consultation. It takes place in any environment for the child. It may be delivered by any staff member under the guidance of a therapist. All of our related therapy services are offered in an integrated manner and focus on meeting individual student needs.

Direct therapy includes both individual and small group activities within or outside of the classroom between the student(s) and the therapist; these activities focus on meeting individual student needs. Adapted Physical Education is considered a direct service.

Characteristics of Direct Therapy

- a) involves the use of specific activities or equipment which requires the skills of a therapist,
- b) requires frequent modification of activities necessary within a treatment session, and
- c) focuses on the child's individual needs.

Monitoring is a service that acknowledges the importance of both specialized expertise and the need for consistent application of strategies across environments. The therapist uses specialized knowledge to evaluate and develop program strategies but trains other staff and parents to implement activities with therapeutic goals in mind.

Characteristics of Monitoring

- a) emphasizes practice, daily routine, and problem solving;
- b) involves programs designed by the therapist and implemented on a daily basis by the instructional staff and parents. Specifically, the therapist:
 - determines appropriate procedures,
 - trains other team members in appropriate strategies,
 - assures proper use of strategies,
 - confirms the strategies are promoting desired outcomes,
 - modifies strategies as needed,
 - supervises the implementation of recommendations.
- c) includes modification and recommendations for environmental needs;
- d) incorporates contact with the student, educational staff, and parents.

Consultation focuses attention on the specific needs of an individual student, but this is done when the therapist feels that the activities encountered daily will meet the child's therapy needs. The therapist will observe the child and give feedback to the team on a designated time frame.

Characteristics of Consultation

- a) occurs throughout the year as follow-up to an initial meeting.
- b) involves the identification of specific needs or problems, their effects on the educational program, the development of methods to meet these needs, the training of staff, and ongoing follow-up.

Criteria for Service

Adapted Physical Education

Physical education classes are implemented in a structured environment, with a small class size. All students receive APE. The classes are adapted to meet the needs of each student.

Nursing

School health services are available to all students. Other medical services, such as the administration of medication may be provided.

Occupational Therapy (OT)

OT is a related service that may be part of a student's IEP. Students who demonstrate an impairment of daily living skills, and/or sensory processing/interpretation that interferes with the ability to function within the educational environment, as determined by an occupational therapist. ***Prescription required yearly to provide services.**

Physical Therapy (PT)

PT is a related service that may be part of a student's IEP. Students who demonstrate impairment or delay in gross motor function that interferes with the ability to function within the educational environment, as determined by a physical therapist. ***Prescription required yearly to provide services.**

Social Work Services

Families who demonstrate one or more of the following:

- a. stress or adjustment problems related to student's problem or crisis situations; and
- b. need for more information regarding the student's problems, needs, educational program, community resources, and support systems.

Speech/Language Therapy (SLP)

Speech and Language is a related service that may be part of a student's IEP. Students who demonstrate an impairment in receptive and/or expressive language that impedes communication within the educational environment.

Students who demonstrates a delay/deficit in the manner in which articulation, phonation, voice quality, etc. takes place which is severe enough to interfere with overall intelligibility within the educational environment.

Vision

Vision is a related service that may be part of a student's IEP. Students who demonstrate a vision impairment that interferes with the ability to function within the educational environment, as determined by a Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI).

Behavior Support

Behavior support is a related service that may be part of a student's IEP. Students who exhibit behaviors that impedes his/her learning or that of others as determined by a Functional Behavior Analysis (FBA).

Special's Classes

Art

Art is often an area of interest for students. Concepts and goals can be reinforced through activities that are motivating. Through art experiences, children develop self-esteem, a greater understanding of their world, increased interest in the arts, appreciation for the work of others and leisure skills that will last a lifetime. Art also encourages problem solving, creative thinking, initiative, persistence, curiosity and responsibility.

In art class students learn about colors, lines, shapes, textures and three-dimensional forms. Additionally, the visual arts assist a child to develop and refine concepts, fine motor skills, tool usage, perceptual skills and social skills. Art is a form of communication that allows students with communication disabilities to express their ideas and feelings.

The primary goals of the art program are skill attainment, reinforcement of IEP goals, and appreciation for art in a variety of forms, independence and involvement. The process is always emphasized over the final product. Children are assisted to complete their work in accordance with individual strengths and needs, and each child's efforts are valued.

Adapted Physical Education

Adapted physical education (APE) is physical education which is adapted or modified to address the individualized needs of children and youth who have gross motor developmental delays. For all practical purposes, Adapted Physical Education is developmentally appropriate physical education at its finest. It involves differentiating instruction so the physical activity is as appropriate for the person with a disability as it is for a person without a disability. Change the word "adapted" to "differentiated" and you have the idea of Adapted Physical Education.

Music

Music therapy is offered to all students. Students both enjoy and benefit from music. Music therapy also provides avenues for communication that can be helpful to those who find it difficult to express themselves in words.

PARENT INFORMATION

Partners in Education (PIE)

PIE enables parents and staff to build relationships by promoting participation in special programs and activities. These programs are planned with the students and their families in mind. Involvement with PIE is encouraged.

Volunteer Policy Overview

Age Requirement

- All volunteers must be 18 years or older.

Who Is Considered a Volunteer?

Anyone participating in a school event in any capacity is considered a volunteer and must complete all required background clearances.

Examples of Event Volunteers

- School events (Fun Day, Holiday Shoppe, Book Fair)
- Classroom birthday celebrations
- One-time parent guest readers
- Chaperones for a single field trip
- Lunch volunteers

Requirements for Regular Volunteers

Regular volunteers must:

- Complete all required background clearances
- Be screened through the Raptor Visitor Management System at each visit
- Wear the issued visitor badge while on site and return it to the office upon leaving

Clearance Portals

Volunteers must obtain the following Pennsylvania clearances:

- Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance (Act 151)
- Pennsylvania State Police Criminal Record Check (Act 34)
- FBI Federal Criminal History Record (Act 114)
 - Fingerprinting completed through IdentoGO
 - A registration code is required
 - Instructions for registering on IdentoGO are provided separately

Parent Support Groups

Parent support groups are offered. The group offers parents the opportunity to share ideas and concerns with others who "really understand." Educational issues of interest to the group are also included as topics of discussion. The group meets several times throughout the school year.

Parent/Staff Communication

Teachers and therapists will communicate with parents. The contact may be in person, by telephone, in writing, or through Microsoft Teams. Staff are not permitted to contact parents using their personal cell phone, personal e-mail accounts or social media. If a parent wants to contact a teacher or therapist to schedule a conference or request additional information:

Utilize Microsoft Teams or send in a note with your child and the teacher/therapist will call during a free period.

OR

Call the teacher/therapist from 8:00 to 8:30 a.m. or 3:00 to 3:45 p.m. If calling during instructional time (between 8:45 and 2:30) you may leave a message on voicemail and the call will be returned as soon as possible.

If you are calling regarding your child leaving early or a change in buses, please call the main office. The secretary will inform your child's teacher of the change.

Microsoft Teams is the media through which staff communicate with parents. This platform is accessible at all times for both staff and families. Information regarding Teams is sent home upon enrollment or at the beginning of each school year.

Thorough communication is a top priority at The Education Center Programs, contact with parents will be attempted at a minimum of 3 times a week through one of the above methods. When a parent contacts a staff member, attempts to return the communication will be made within 1-2 working days.

Class Placement

Decisions regarding classroom placement are made during the preceding summer of each school year. Although rare, occasionally a change will occur during the school year. These decisions are made by the program director in consultation with team members. Consideration is given to the following issues:

- safety of all students
- chronological age
- functional skills
- social skills
- physical needs
- behavioral needs

Visitors

The Watson Institute holds safety issues high on our list of priorities and our facilities are secure. All visitors are required to "buzz in" as **the entrance doors are locked, as are all entry doors**. There is a keypad outside the main entrance. Both school offices have monitors so that staff can both see & hear the person requesting entrance to the school. Once admitted to the building, all visitors are required to report to the office. We utilize Raptor, a visitor management system. We're using this to ensure the safety of our students and staff. Visitors will need to present a driver's license to be scanned and verified against the records database. The system helps us keep track of who is always in the building and ensure that only authorized visitors are allowed access. Your driver's license information will be kept secure & confidential. We can accept other forms of government-issued identification that contain a photo and a current address. This can include:

- Passport

- College ID
- Military ID

Once your driver's license or ID is scanned, the system generates a visitor badge that must be worn at all times while in the building. Visitors are not permitted within the school unless an ID is visible and accompanied by a staff member. Parents who have a scheduled meeting and are without an ID, will only be permitted to attend the meeting and will be accompanied by a staff member.

Once a person's ID has been scanned, this will be available to pull up and print an ID badge for any future visits. All visitors must return to the main office, and hand their badge to the administrative assistant to be signed out.

Visiting in Classrooms

We know that many of you are interested in methods and materials used to evaluate and teach your child. You are encouraged to observe the classroom via the camera system and become involved in your child's program.

Classroom organization and structured routines are critical to the learning process. Therefore, it is necessary to prepare all children for any visits that might interfere with the normal routine. Observations will take place from a remote room, via a monitor, as to not disrupt the classroom.

Please arrange your visits ahead of time (minimal 24 hours' notice) with the social worker, teacher/therapist, or program director and indicate what classes or therapies you are interested in viewing.

Pre-arranging the visit will allow the teacher/therapist to reserve time to respond to your questions and concerns immediately following the observation.

Custodial Relations

1. Upon acceptance to The Watson Institute educational programs, a minor student's parents/guardians shall be identified. If a parent/guardian resides outside the residence where the child resides, the following information is requested (if it exists)

- A. Any court orders or legal directive related to;
 - i. What is the custody arrangement for the child physically?
 - ii. Who has educational rights?
 - iii. Is anyone prohibited from physical custody or educational information?
 - iv. Is there any order regarding medical issues?
- B. Any shared custody or informal agreements (signed by all legal parents).
- C. Any documents verifying a non-legal custodial parent arrangement signed by all legal parents. A non-legal custodial arrangement is a custody arrangement where all legal parents have not formally given up or gained any specific rights regarding educational decision making and no legal determination of

custody has been made.

2. If there is no documentation submitted to the school, it is assumed that all parents share custody and information will be shared with all parents.
3. Any custodial documentation will be given to the Social Work department. They will review the information, consult with administration as necessary and inform the educational team (including nursing) of all custody arrangements. A copy of any legal documentation will be shared with the educational team as well. A paper copy of the order will be given to the secretarial staff to be placed in the student's paper and electronic file.

POA/Guardianship

1. Students over the age of 18 may have documents indicating who may have decision making capacity in regard to their person (physical well-being) and/or their property (financial well-being). A Power of Attorney (POA) is a document signed by a capacitated person that assigns decision making capacity to another on a temporary or long-term basis. If a student and/or family indicate they have a POA, they will be asked to submit a copy to the school. The procedure for sharing this information with concerned school parties will be the same as in number 3 above.
2. Guardianship involves a court procedure in which a person is legally declared incapacitated in regard to their person or property. If the person is declared incapacitated, the court will appoint a legal guardian to make decisions on behalf of the person. If a person has pursued guardianship on behalf of a student, a copy of the guardianship will be requested and given to a school social worker. Procedure number 3 above will then be followed.

Guardian ad litem

A Guardian ad litem is someone (usually a lawyer) appointed by the court to act in a lawsuit on behalf of another party such as a child or incapacitated adult who is deemed incapable of representing himself. A Guardian ad litem is only acting during the course of the specific lawsuit or action to make sure the interests of the child or incapacitated person are addressed. If one is appointed to a student at The Education Center, the social worker should be notified and act as the contact person.

CYS

It is the policy of The Watson Institute to cooperate with all requests from any County Children and Youth (CYS) agency. If a student is placed outside of the home or if any CIS involvement regarding that specific student is identified, the social worker will;

1. Explore the situation and determine the extent of CIS, foster or placement involvement.
2. Request any appropriate court orders or documentation to clarify the student's current situation and establish roles in relation to educational planning.
3. Coordinate any educationally related visits or information sharing.
4. Provide information as requested to CIS or any related party.
5. Represent the school in any court related proceedings. Please note school staff may be involved as requested as well.

Any documentation acquired from CYS or any parties related to the court ordered placement will be given to the school social worker. They will share the information with the educational team and have a copy placed in the child's paper and electronic file.

Protection from Abuse (PFA)

A PFA is a legal document which can outline ways an alleged abuser can or can't interact with alleged victims. Adult victims can petition for a PFA to include minor children. There are different types of PFAs (each county may address this differently). Generally, if a PFA is issued, initially a temporary order is done first. This can last until the date of the final hearing (usually around 10 days). If a final PFA is issued, it can remain in effect up to three years (as specified in the document). If a parent/guardian/family member submits a PFA to the school;

1. The PFA will be forwarded to the school social worker.
2. The social worker will review and clarify any information in the PFA (including relevant dates).
3. The social worker will notify the educational team, Program Director and Team Coordinators and front office staff of the PFA and any relevant information.
4. A copy of the PFA will be circulated to the Educational team as well as placed in the student's paper and electronic file.

Residential Placement

For students who are in residential placement (group homes, medical residences), their parents/legal guardians maintain all educational rights. A Release of Information (ROI) from the school or institution should be signed by the parents/guardians in order to communicate the day-to-day needs of the student. The ROI will be shared with all classroom staff and nurses. A copy will be put in the student's paper and electronic file.

ORGANIZATIONAL INFORMATION

School Calendars

Student days are defined by one calendar, showing the school-age and preschool programs (program specific). The calendar specifies hours of operation, vacations, holidays, and special events.

Each enrollment packet includes a copy of the calendar. Keep your calendar so that you may refer to it during the school year. This is also available on the main Watson website.

Lunch Program

For the 2025-2026 school year, students will be offered a free lunch and a free grab and go breakfast. Lunch comes with a drink (juice or milk). If your child needs JUST a drink or an extra drink, these would be charged to their lunch account. Your child may bring a lunch to school.

If you want your child to have a school lunch, 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. 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 form.**
- Students who bring a lunch/breakfast/snack from home must send the heated food in a thermos. We have a policy regarding the heating of student foods and do not heat items in the microwave for safety reasons.
- Parents who pack their child's lunch/breakfast/snack must send food to school ready to serve. The food must come to school cut up, pureed and/or mixed together, as necessary for the child.

Metal water bottles are not permitted at school.

This decision has been made to prioritize student and staff safety during the school day.

We kindly ask that families send students with **plastic or non-metal insulated bottles** that are lightweight and safe for everyday use.

The Watson Institute Lunch Account Policy

Parents can pay online via the lunch website www.ezparentcenter.com. They are encouraged to keep money in student account, so it does not go into a negative balance. Weekly notices will be emailed from EZ School Apps to parents regarding balances. Please be sure to sign up on the website to receive the notices.

PLEASE NOTE

The Watson Institute is a nut free facility. Many of the students at The Watson Institute Education Center Programs 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 avoid 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. We appreciate your cooperation and support regarding this policy.

Lunch Program Nondiscrimination Statement:

Nondiscrimination statement: This explains what to do if you believe you have been treated unfairly. "in accordance with Federal Law and U.S. department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race,

color, national origin, sex, age or disability. To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call toll free (866)632-9992(Voice). Individuals who are hearing impaired or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800)877-8339; or (800)845-6136(Spanish). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.”

Lunch Times & Individual Feeding Programs:

Feeding/self-feeding needs are assessed initially when students begin at The Watson Institute Education Center Programs. Ongoing assessment throughout the school year is handled by the occupational and speech therapist assigned to your child. These assessments evaluate the student for feeding issues regarding positioning, equipment and modification to food and drink textures. Following this evaluation, if needed, an individual feeding program is established detailing specific techniques to be used and/or any equipment needs your child may have established. This program is primarily carried out during snack time and lunch time. Modifications to these programs are done throughout the school year as the student develops skills or requires further adaptations due to change in their status. Additionally, a more detailed assessment, from outside sources may be indicated or requested to ensure that the staff at The Watson Institute Education Center Programs are providing the most appropriate and safest method for feeding your child. Some students already receive assistance from outside sources in regard to their feeding issues; please share this information with The Watson Institute Education Center Programs staff so that they may assist with carryover.

Transportation

School districts are responsible for providing daily transportation. **The Watson Institute does not arrange or schedule transportation services.** If you have any questions concerning transportation, please contact your district's transportation office.

You are responsible for notifying the transportation provider if your child will not be riding the bus or will only need transportation one way.

If your child leaves The Watson Institute Education Center Programs on his/her bus before 2:30 p.m. or after 3:15 p.m., you will be notified by a member of the staff.

Clothing Needs

Many children have similar clothing, lunch boxes, backpacks or materials; labeling the articles with your child's name will aid identification. If there are special clothing needs during the year, you will be contacted by staff.

For students, the following items must be sent to school for use as needed:

- a one-week supply of diapers or training pants, if your child is on a toilet training program
- two complete changes of clothing

Your child's teacher will inform you when clothing is needed.

Student Dress Code

School attire should be such that it does not present health or safety problems or disturb or disrupt the educational process. The following items will serve as a minimum guide to acceptable dress for students.

- No obscene language may be printed on shirts or pants.

- Shoes must be worn at all times. Flip flops and backless shoes are discouraged.
- 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 reference
 - Overly graphic or frightening imagery

Appointments

Regular attendance at school is important if children are to maintain and develop new skills. Occasionally, however, events such as medical/therapy appointments arise and must be scheduled during the school day.

If the appointment is scheduled during school hours, please notify your child's teacher in advance of the appointment. If you plan to bring your child to school later in the day, please share your intention with the teacher. Staff will then be notified of the arrival time. Also, please indicate if your child will arrive in time for lunch and if he/she is buying or bringing a lunch. If your child is returning home on the bus, **YOU** will be responsible for notifying the transportation provider.

A student excuse form is required to be completed for all student absences. This can be sent in with the student or via email.

Arrival and Dismissal - Regular Time

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.

Late Arrival and Early Dismissal

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. If your child must leave early, please notify the teacher of the time you plan to come for your child.

If you are picking up your child early or dropping off late, call the office as described above. A staff member will meet you and your child at your car.

If anyone other than a parent is picking up a student, they must be listed on the student's emergency contact form or we must have parental verbal permission prior to pick up. They will be asked to show a photo ID before the student is released to them.

Please remember to contact the transportation provider if this changes the typical transportation schedule.

Your cooperation will help us to plan a smooth transition for your child on days when late arrival or early dismissal is necessary. If you have any questions about this procedure, please contact the Program Director.

The Watson Institute Education Center Programs Attendance Policy

At The Watson Institute, we value our students and recognize that consistent attendance is essential to maximizing the educational opportunities provided to our students through unique programming. This policy describes the attendance requirements for our students.

School Hours

Doors open for students at 8:45 a.m., and the student school day is from 8:45 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. School offices are open from 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Absences

Under the guidance of LEAs, The Watson Institute Education Center Programs are required by the Pennsylvania Department of Education to maintain detailed absentee records. Excuses for absences are required in writing from you for all the days your child is absent from school, arrives late or has an early dismissal. The excuse needs to include your child's name, date and time of absence/late arrival/early dismissal, and reason. It must be signed by you or your child's doctor.

Notification of student absences and/or late arrivals and early dismissals is required. If a student will not be coming to school the parent or guardian can send a detailed email to:

- Or call 412-914-8800 to notify the office at South or 412-741-1800 to notify the Sewickley office.
- A handwritten note or an e-mail (to your child's teacher) will be accepted for up to 10 parentally excused days per school year. Physician excuse notes can be sent into school with the student.

Summary

At the Watson Institute, we want our students to take full advantage of their educational experiences. We will do our best to support our students in their efforts to meet the attendance requirements, as we understand many of our students experience medical or behavioral issues that may require extended absences.

School Closing and Early Dismissal

To ensure the safety of children, The Watson Institute Education Center Programs suspend operation and/or delay when the roads are unsafe. Announcements regarding the closing of school may be seen on the television station listed below:

KDKA - Channel 2

The announcement states the closing of the school:

"Education Center at The Watson Institute Sewickley"
"Education Center at The Watson Institute South"

The Watson Institute uses the **e2Campus emergency notification** system that enables the school to send urgent news to your cell phone, home phone and/or email account. The Education Center Programs can send timely information to you about emergencies, weather delays or school reminders. Parents are responsible for updating their information in the e2Campus system. Directions on how to access this system are provided upon enrollment and at the beginning of each school year.

If weather conditions worsen during the day, children may be dismissed early. If your child is to leave The Watson Institute Education Center Programs before the regular dismissal time, a staff member will call you to ensure that someone will be at home to receive your child. If we are unable to contact you, the transportation provider will have to wait until we can ensure someone is home.

If your child's school bus has not arrived at the school by 3:15 p.m., a staff member will contact you to inform you that your child will arrive home at a later time. If weather conditions are bad and your child has not arrived home at the usual time, **please call the transportation provider.**

All children will be sent home when the school bus arrives at The Watson Institute Education Center Programs. If the transportation vehicle is unable to reach the school, you will be notified so you can arrange transportation for your child. The parent is responsible for picking up or arranging appropriate transportation for your child.

Open House

Each school year, you and your family are invited to spend an afternoon at The Watson Institute Education Center Programs to become acquainted with your child's program and the staff. This event provides a general overview of the program. It is not a time for individual conferences with your child's teacher/therapists.

Student Photographs

School pictures, which you may purchase, are taken once a year by an independent photographer. Information is sent to you as the scheduled date nears.

Student Publicity

Students may be involved in media activities to promote The Watson Institute Education Center Programs or a special event. Students are not included unless you have given permission. A Photo Consent Form is included in the enrollment packet and at the beginning of each school year.

Video Recording

To protect student privacy, maintain a safe and distraction-free learning environment, and comply with confidentiality standards, the school enforces a strict **no-videoing rule** for all parents, guardians, and visitors.

Policy Overview

Parents, students and visitors **may not record video or audio** on school property or during school-sponsored events unless explicit permission has been granted by administration. Parents may not send students to school with wearable audio or video recording devices. This includes:

- **Video recording** with phones, tablets, cameras, or wearable devices
- **Live streaming** on any social media or communication platform
- **Audio recording** of classroom instruction, student interactions, or staff conversations
- **Posting images or videos** of students other than your own

Rationale

This policy exists to:

- Protect student privacy and comply with FERPA
- Prevent accidental sharing of sensitive or identifying information
- Reduce distractions during learning and school events
- Ensure all students feel safe, respected, and comfortable

Enforcement

Staff members will remind parents of this policy if recording is observed. Continued recording may result in:

- A request to stop and delete the recording
- Removal from the classroom or event
- Administrative follow-up as needed

Communication

The school will communicate this policy through:

- The annual Parent Handbook
- Event invitations and announcements
- Posted signage at entrances

GPS and Tracking Devices

1.Purpose

This policy outlines the appropriate use of electronic devices, including **personal communication devices, assistive technology, and GPS tracking devices (e.g., AngelSense)**, to ensure a safe and supportive learning environment.

2. General Policy on Electronic Devices

- Students may bring personal electronic devices (e.g., tablets, communication devices, smartwatches) **only if approved by the school administration** as part of their Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Plan.
- Unauthorized use of electronic devices during school hours may result in **confiscation** and return at the end of the day.
- The school is **not responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged devices** brought from home.

3. GPS Tracking and AngelSense Devices

- **Permitted Use:** GPS tracking devices, including **AngelSense**, may be used **for safety purposes** when a student has a history of elopement, medical conditions, or other special needs requiring monitoring.
- **Audio Listening Restrictions:** To protect student and staff privacy, any **live audio or recording functions must be disabled** during school hours
- **Parental Responsibility:** Parents must inform the school in writing if their child will use a GPS tracking device, and it must be **worn discreetly and not disrupt learning**.
- **School Discretion:** The administration reserves the right to review and approve tracking devices on a **case-by-case basis** to ensure compliance with school policies.

4. Assistive Technology Devices

- Any **communication devices (AAC devices, text-to-speech tools, etc.)** required for a student's education must be included in their **IEP**.
- Devices used for educational purposes must be **registered with the school** and may be subject to restrictions on internet and app usage..

5. Policy Review & Updates

- This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure it aligns with technological advancements and student safety needs.

Outside Service Providers

If your child receives services from an outside provider, please note that staff is not able to attend meetings, therapy sessions, or consultations arranged by those providers. In addition, we are not able to provide access to students for virtual appointments with outside service providers during the school day. All external services must be scheduled outside of school hours.

If an appointment must occur during the school day, a parent or guardian is required to pick the student up from school following the attendance procedures. The student should be signed out for the duration of the appointment and may return to school afterward if appropriate.

Community-based Instruction

Community-Based Instruction (CBI) is defined as individualized instruction that is overseen and performed outside of the normal classroom with the focus on having students become active participants in their own communities with increased independence. CBI activities can focus on many different areas. They can be work experiences, functional daily living skills, recreational activities, and community resource awareness.

Field Trips

Occasionally, field trips are incorporated as part of the program. A Field Trip form will be sent home prior to the field trip explaining the purpose, time, and place of the trip. The bottom of the form must be signed and returned to the school before your child may participate.

Fire Drills/Intruder Alert Drills

Fire Drills are held once a month to comply with state law. When the alarm rings and flashes, everyone leaves the building. Staff will lead students to an assigned area and remain there until the fire drill ends.

Intruder Alert Drills are held once a month to ensure safety in the event of an actual intruder in the building.

Socialization Time

Recess offers a short break in a busy day. Students will use the playgrounds, gym, and outside walking area when the weather permits. Students must follow all playground rules.

STUDENT INFORMATION

Student Management

Success in life requires self-control, social competence, and the ability to perform task-related skills. Positive student behavior is fostered through group-based and individual positive management programs developed collaboratively by staff with parents.

Guidelines for Promoting Positive Behavior at Watson Institute Education Centers

- Positive behavior supports will be used with students at all times.
- Calm neutral tones of voice will be used with students when implementing positive behavior support strategies.
- General preventative strategies will be used to support behavior.
- Students with behavioral challenges have a Positive Behavior Support Plan. The strategies in this plan are to be followed when intervening and working with the student.
- Interventions should focus on teaching appropriate behavior to replace maladaptive behavior.
- Any crisis prevention procedures used with a child at Watson must be stated in the child's Positive Behavior Support Plan. If it is not part of the Behavior Plan, it cannot be used. The exception being if the student presents himself or others as an imminent danger, the crisis prevention procedures will be implemented. A call to the parents will occur the same day.

Student Records Policy

The Watson Institute Education Center Programs are required to collect and maintain education and medical records for all students. You have the right to review your child's records in accordance with our plan for confidentiality. Arrangements for reviewing the records may be made through the program supervisor.

The education record for each student is organized in the following format:

- 100 Placement Materials
 - 110 Enrollment Information Sheets
 - 120 IEP (Initial)
 - 130 Enrollment Form
- 200 Request for Change in Approved School Assignment
 - 200 Due Process Materials
 - 210 Request for Parent Participation in IEP Meeting
 - 220 Notice of Recommended Assignment
 - 230 Documentation of Decision Making for Individual Placement
 - 240 Notice of Intent to Reevaluate
 - 250 Materials for Change in Placement
 - 260 Classroom Age Span Letter
 - 270 Request for Change in APS Assignment (PDE 4011)
- 300 Evaluation Report (RR)
- 400 Educational Information
 - 410 IEP (Current)
 - 420 IEP Revisions
- 500 General Information
 - 510 Documentation of Information Sent to You
 - 520 Documentation of Information Sent to School District/IU
 - 530 Conference Reports
 - 540 Consent Forms
 - 541 Community-Based Instruction Consent
 - 542 Field Trip Consent
 - 543 Miscellaneous
 - 550 Release of Information
 - 560 Student Excuses
- 600 Referral Materials
 - 610 PASA Testing Results
 - 620 Evaluation Report
 - 630 Medical Statement
 - 640 Placement Options List
 - 650 Placement Acceptance Letter
 - 660 Application for Educational Assignment to Approved School (PDE 4010)
- 700 Chapter 14 Information (Green)
- 800 ESY (Maroon)
- 900 Testing Materials (Pink)
- 1000 Overflow (Manilla)

Medical records include the information specified below.

- > Emergency Health Form

- > Nurse's notes
- > School Health Information and
- > Copies of the nurse's letters

Confidentiality

The Guidelines for the Collection, Maintenance, and Dissemination of Student Records adopted by the Pennsylvania Department of Education in 1978 serve as the foundation of our policies relating to the confidentiality of student educational and medical files.

All information regarding students is strictly confidential and is for professional use only. No information is shared without your approval except for education and health records routinely sent to the child's school district.

Reevaluation Process

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Public Law 101-476, as amended, mandates a periodic reevaluation of the educational program and placement of each child to determine continued eligibility for special education. The responsibility for this reevaluation rests with the IEP team, which includes you and professionals knowledgeable about your child's educational needs. The Education Center programs conduct reevaluations every two years for preschoolers and for school-age students, however, reevaluations may occur more frequently if necessary.

Individualized Education Program (IEP)

An Individualized Education Program (IEP) is required for all children with disabilities and defines the individual specially designed instruction which support the educational program for each child based upon an evaluation of the child's needs.

IEPs are planned for the school year and are reviewed annually for all students. If the need to revise an IEP section is necessary during the school year, that section will be revised. Parents/guardians or school district representatives have the right to request an IEP meeting to discuss the proposed revision.

To facilitate participation in IEP conferences, all team members are notified. The IEP is scheduled at a date and time that is mutually convenient. The IEP process implemented at Watson is done in accordance with IDEA.

Meetings are held virtually using Teams. If parents request an in-person meeting, this will need to be scheduled in the AM, 8:15AM to 9:30AM or in the afternoon, between 2:30PM and 4:00PM. This allows educational staff to be on the floor and providing instruction without disruption to students.

Progress Reports

Progress reports are prepared quarterly to inform you of your child's progress toward specific IEP goals and objectives. Letter codes reflect progress on the current IEP. The key for the codes is as follows:

Date that goal/objective was mastered

- P - Progressing
- I - Introduced
- NI - Not Introduced
- NP - No Progress on Objective
- R - Regression
- NDA - No Data Available

The reports should be kept for future reference. The reports are placed on the student's individual TEAM's page.

Complaints/Appeals

Upon receipt of a complaint by a parent/legal guardian regarding educational services; the individual should contact the Program Director to resolve the issue. The Program Director will follow up within 2 business days. If the discussion does not result in a successful resolution, the parent/guardian can bring the complaint to the Executive Director of the Education Center Programs. If that does not result in successful resolution, the Program Director will inform the parent/guardian that the School District

representative will be notified and will contact the parent. The parent/guardian will be given a copy of the Procedural Safeguards.

Destruction of Students Records

When a student is dis-enrolled from The Watson Institute Education Center Programs, the district of residence and the parent will be contacted and asked if they would like any of the past records of the student. Your student's school district is provided the original of the following documents; IEPs, RRs, IEP invitations and other educational documents. Any records they request will be sent to them and the remaining records will be destroyed. If at any time after the student is dis-enrolled the parent would like to request records, they will be directed to call the student's school district.

MEDICAL INFORMATION

Medication Policy

Please also refer to the Medical Packet sent home.

The following is our medication policy. If your child needs to receive medication during the school day, the procedure outlined below must be followed.

1. All medications, including over the counter medications (Tylenol, cold medicines, Benadryl, etc.) are to be delivered to the nurse in their **original pharmacy** containers. Delivery of medication is your responsibility. If you ask, the pharmacy will provide bottles, one for home and one for school. Parents are required to hand deliver medications to school nurses at the beginning of each school year. Locked medication bags will be used for transportation of medications to/from school throughout the year. Information about this process is provided upon enrollment and at the beginning of each school year.
2. A copy of the **prescription** or the **physician's written order** must accompany the medications (over the counter meds included). The prescription and physician's written order must be dated July 1st or after for the upcoming school year. If there appears to be a discrepancy between the prescription and the medication label, the nurse will not give the medication and will inform you of the discrepancy. **The medication will not be given until the nurse has the copy of the prescription or the order.** It is the parent's responsibility to ask the doctor for the order at the appointment, or to call the doctor and have the order faxed to the school nurse.
3. With "as needed" medication, the doctor needs to be as specific as possible regarding the administration of the medication, including symptoms, dosage amount and timing of doses. (Example: May have Tylenol at school for fever greater than 100 F or pain, 325mg, every 4-6 hours).
4. In the case of a short -term medication such as an antibiotic, if one dose needs to be given at school, ask the doctor to write the note stating the dosage, time and length of therapy and ask the pharmacy to provide two bottles, one for home and one for school.
5. Please send in **at least** a two-week supply of the medication. All medications are kept in a locked cabinet in the nurse's office for the safety and confidentiality of our students.
6. All medications will be administered by a certified school nurse or other licensed personnel (RN, LPN). Students are not permitted to self-administer medications while at school.

7. Medication variances are deviations from the standard of care. In the event of a medication variance, the school nurse will complete a medication variance form and notify the parent/guardian, Program Coordinator/Director and Human Resources. The school nurse will notify the licensed prescriber if there is potential for harm to the student. The student will be assessed by the school nurse for problematic effects.

Information on our medical policy and procedure is provided upon enrollment and sent home at the beginning of each school year.

Health Screenings

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania requires the following health screenings, which may be provided by the family physician or by The Watson Institute Education Center Programs:

- > annual vision screening;
- > annual hearing screening;
- > a tuberculin test every three years;
- > physical examination at 11 years of age;
- > dental examination at enrollment, 8 years and 12 years of age; and
- > scoliosis screening at ages 11 and 12

The nurse will inform you about specific screenings.

Allegheny County School Immunization Requirement

28 PA Code, Chapter 23, Subchapter C requires that all children, kindergarten through 12th, including all public, private, parochial, intermediate unit and home-schooled students, show written proof of immunization before they can attend school in the Commonwealth. Your child will not be permitted to attend school until proof of immunizations have been submitted and approved by the Certified School Nurse.

Students who are entering school are required to have the following properly spaced vaccines:

- 4 doses of tetanus, diphtheria and acellular pertussis
 - 1 dose on or after 4th birthday; 3 doses if series started after 7 years of age
- 4 doses of polio
 - 4th dose on or after 4th birthday or 3 doses if last one is after 4th birthday with proper spacing
- 2 doses of measles, mumps, rubella (usually given as MMR)
- 3 doses of Hepatitis B with proper spacing
- 2 doses of varicella (chickenpox) vaccine
 - First one on or after first birthday
 - or written statement from physician/designee indicating month and year of disease
 - or serologic proof of immunity

Students entering GRADE 7 are required to have the following vaccines in addition to the above vaccines:

- 1 dose of tetanus/diphtheria/pertussis (Tdap)
- 1 dose of meningitis (MCV4)

Students entering GRADE 12 are required to have the following vaccine in addition to the above vaccines:

- 2nd dose of meningitis (MCV4)

A child entering school on the first day must have had at least one dose of the above vaccinations or risk exclusion.

- If the child does not have all the doses listed above, and the next dose is medically appropriate, the child must receive that dose within the first five days of school or risk exclusion.
- If the next dose is not the final dose of the series, the child must also provide a medical plan, (red and white card), signed by a physician, for obtaining the required immunizations within the first five days of school or risk exclusion.
- If the child does not have all the doses listed above and the next dose is not medically appropriate, the child must provide a medical plan red and white card), signed by a physician, within the first five days of school for obtaining the required immunization or risk exclusion.

The Allegheny County Health Department (412-578-8060) will provide school required vaccines to children if they are uninsured, have Medicaid, or are an American Indian or Alaskan Native.

MEDICAL EXEMPTIONS

Only licensed medical doctors, doctors of osteopathy, and designated Health Department personnel can sign for medical exemption. Chiropractors' certification for medical exemptions are not acceptable. A medical exemption for a specific antigen(s) should be documented in the statement of exemption. All other Immunizations are still required.

RELIGIOUS EXEMPTIONS

Statements of religious or strong moral or ethical conviction opposing immunization must be submitted in writing and signed by a parent or the guardian.

If a child is exempt from immunizations, he/she may be removed from school during a disease outbreak.

MANDATED PROCEDURES

Pennsylvania law mandates the following screenings:

- *Vision – Grades K to 12, annually
- *Hearing – Grades K to 3, 7 and 11. Also parent or teacher referrals and student who have known hearing loss
- *Height and Weight and BMI % - Grades K to 12, annually
- *Scoliosis – Grades 6, 7

Pennsylvania law mandates the following examinations:

- *Physical - Grades K, 6, 11
- *Dental - Grades K, 3, 7

GUIDELINES FOR STUDENT ILLNESSES

The Education Center Programs follow the Allegheny County Health Department Guidelines

When Should You Keep Your Child At Home?

Your child is to remain at home if they have any of the following symptoms:

- Oral temperature above 100 degrees
 - Nausea/vomiting
 - Diarrhea/loose stool
 - Excessive nasal drainage
 - Unusually irritable, restless or tired/sleepless night
 - Persistent cough
 - Sore throat
 - Suspected pink eye, scabies, lice, ringworm, impetigo, chicken pox, rashes and MUST be seen by a doctor.
- Send in a note from doctor stating that your child is being treated and it is ok to return to school.

Guidelines For When Your Child Can Return To School After An Illness:

Condition	Minimum Days from Start of Illness
Vomiting	After Child has kept food down for 24 hours
Diarrhea	24 hours after last diarrhea
Fever	Once the temperature is normal for 24 hours WITHOUT fever reducing medication.
Strep Throat	24 hours after treatment begins, send note from doctor
Pinkeye, Lice, Scabies, Ringworm	24 hours after treatment begins, send note from doctor
Chicken Pox	6-7 days or until all blisters are dry, send note from doctor

If your child becomes sick at school, you will be contacted to come pick up your child.

It is **MANDATORY** that you have designated a family member or friend who is available to pick up your child if you are unable to.

HOSPITALIZATION POLICY

If your child stayed overnight in the hospital for ANY reason, they must remain at home for 24 hours after discharge before returning to school. This is to ensure that he/she does not relapse and is fully recovered.

The following information is **required** in order to return to school:

- Note from the doctor stating what date the student may return
- List of restrictions or no restrictions (i.e. gym, therapies, etc.)
- Hospital discharge papers

All paperwork can be faxed to the nurse's office at each building.

HOSPITALIZATION POLICY

If your child stayed overnight in the hospital for ANY reason, they must remain at home for 24 hours after discharge before returning to school. This is to ensure that he/she does not relapse and are fully recovered.

The following information is needed **PRIOR** to the student's return to school:

- Note from doctor stating what date the student may return
- List restrictions or no restrictions
- Hospital discharge papers
- Any medication changes

All paperwork can be faxed to the nurses at
412-749-6499 – Sewickley
412-914-8820 – Bridgeville

Any questions, please call 412-749-2808 – Sewickley
412-914-8811 - Bridgeville

Private Duty Nurse (PDN) Policy Purpose

To ensure all Private Duty Nurses (PDNs) are properly cleared, oriented, and communicated to relevant staff prior to providing services, while maintaining student safety and program compliance.

PDN Clearance and Onboarding

- All PDNs must have required clearances completed before arriving on site, except in unexpected emergency situations.
- Upon arrival, every new PDN must meet with the Watson nursing team the first day they are on site. During this meeting, the PDN will:
 - Review PDN Guidelines.
 - Review the PDN Information Sheet.
 - Sign all required acknowledgment forms.
- Copies of signed documents must be provided to the PDN's agency.

Building Orientation

The classroom teacher will provide a brief orientation covering:

- Building layout.
- Emergency exits.
- Restroom locations.
- Other essential building procedures and logistics.

Communication and Notification

When a teacher learns that a new PDN has been assigned to a student, the teacher must immediately notify via email:

- Program Director.
- Watson nursing team.
- Any other relevant staff.

Absence of a PDN

- Parents and/or the school district must first contact the nursing agency to secure a replacement nurse.
- If no replacement is available, the nursing agency—not the parent—must notify Watson nurses.
- The nursing agency must provide an updated Plan of Care (485), as applicable.

- Watson nurses must have current physician orders for all medications, feedings, and treatments, as well as an updated daily medication/feeding schedule for the current school year. [

Student Attendance Without a PDN

A student may attend school without a PDN only when all of the following parties agree:

- Parent/guardian.
- School district (including transportation arrangements).
- Physician, with a current school-year letter approving attendance without a PDN.
- Watson nurses assigned to the student's building.

Additionally, Watson nurses must receive advance notice to ensure adequate nursing coverage is available within the building before approval is granted.

Thank you for complying with our school policies.

We are excited for the new school year!