

The Board does not permit private outside providers, such as Applied Behavior Analysis (“ABA”) therapists, physical therapists (“PTs”), occupational therapists (“OTs”), and mental health providers, to accompany students on campus during the school day. Students wishing to receive private therapy must do so off campus and are encouraged to do so outside of school hours.

I. STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Watauga County Schools is responsible for providing all students with special needs accommodations, specially designed instruction, related services, supplemental aides, and supports they need to access their educational services. Private providers working with students with special needs may be permitted to collaborate with school staff.

Parents may invite their private providers to participate in IEP or 504 team meetings, as individuals with knowledge or special expertise about their child, or to provide written recommendations to the school. Parents are also encouraged to provide consent for any private providers to exchange information and records with school staff regarding the child’s services and needs.

a. ABA and IEP Documents

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (“IDEA”) does not require a methodology, such as ABA, be written into IEPs, but it does ask that Evidence Based Practices (“EBPs”) be used to the extent practicable. Watauga County Schools teachers are trained in and implement multiple EBPs in the classroom and whole school environment. A methodology, such as ABA, consists of multiple EBPs.

IEP teams must put a comprehensive program in place to accommodate various instructional strategies and methodologies. Specifying a methodology within the IEP may limit the ability of the school district to do so.

ABA is not a related service under IDEA and the choice of educational methodology is left to the school-based educators by IDEA.

b. Modified Day for Private Outside Provider Services

Watauga County Schools is required to serve eligible student’s educational needs through their IEP. The provision of outside services during the school day may impede the ability of Watauga County Schools to provide a student with a free appropriate public education.

A parent may request their child be placed on a modified school day in order to receive private outside provider services. If such a request is made, the student’s IEP Team shall conduct a meeting to determine whether placement on a modified day is educationally necessary for the child.

c. Removal of Students for Private Outside Provider Services Without Modified Day

If the IEP Team has determined that a modified day is not educationally necessary for a student, but the student's parent or guardian has indicated they intend to take their child out of school each day, or on a regular basis, for outside provider services, certain consequences may apply.

If a child is removed from school prior to 11:30 a.m., the student will be considered absent for the entirety of the school day. If a physician has prescribed a therapy to which this policy applies, these absences will be treated as excused medical absences with appropriate documentation provided as required by Board Policy 4400.

Nothing in this policy changes the requirements to report excessive, unexcused absences under G.S. 115C-378.

Consistent removal of a student from the school day by a parent for the purpose of receiving services from a private outside provider may impact the ability of Watauga County Schools to gather complete data on a student's academic levels and impede the student's ability to make progress on IEP goals. Removal from the school day may also result in the student missing services to which they are entitled by their IEP.

Legal References: G.S. 115C-378

Cross References: Special Education Program/Rights of Students with Disabilities (policy 3520), Attendance (4400)

Adopted: July 11, 2024