



**WATAUGA COUNTY
BOARD OF EDUCATION**

Margaret E. Gragg Education Center
175 Pioneer Trail Boone, NC 28607
(828) 264-7190

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s):

You are receiving this letter because your child currently receives special education services (including speech/language, physical and/or occupational therapy) through Watauga County Schools. Being schools are currently closed until further notice in response to the COVID-19 virus, I want to inform you of the Watauga County Schools EC Department Remote Learning Plan and related information. Please see important information about special education and related service delivery methods below:

Per federal and State guidance, please note that no services are required for special education students by law during any time period when regular education/non-disabled students are not receiving educational services. When all students are required to receive education services, we will be providing various forms and levels of remote learning opportunities for our students with disabilities.

1. We are suspending all evaluations and assessments due to safety issues. This involves evaluations and assessments for initial referrals and reevaluations. It is not possible to complete a valid and reliable assessment and maintain safety for students, parents and families and WCS staff. We will be holding IEP meetings to discuss these evaluation processes in the near future and will determine our steps moving forward after school resumes.
2. Related services and Adapted Physical Education will be delivered in one of three ways: Video sessions for students who can receive therapy in small groups, Teletherapy for students who need one on one therapy or giving parents the option for compensatory services. Staff will be contacting parents to discuss these options in order to plan for next week's remote learning services.
3. EC Resource teachers will provide remote learning via video lessons, Google Hangouts, Canvas, Google Classroom and other options. Our school day for all students is 3 hours---which is about half of what it is normally---so our EC service expectation is half of what is on their IEP. Teachers will send out packets and supplement the packets with video options.
4. EC PreK teachers will provide as much remote learning as much as possible, especially with parent support, but we know this may be difficult for our PreK aged students. If we cannot provide remote learning, then we will provide compensatory services later.
5. EC self-contained teachers will do as much remote learning as possible but may not be able to meet the per day needs for each child or students may not be able to participate due to their level of disability. If we cannot provide remote learning, then we will provide compensatory services later.
6. Student in homebound placements and students who are homeschooled normally and receive EC services will need to participate via remote learning options as all other students.
7. Our remote learning activities may include several children sharing an online platform. We will make every attempt to use online platforms that allow for maximum confidentiality, but this may not be

possible at all times. We must ask you to be mindful of not only your child's confidentiality, but the confidentiality of other students who may see on the screen as part of the remote activity.

8. Your child's EC Case Manager and other service providers will be contacting you twice per week to see how you and your child are doing, how the remote learning lessons are going and to find out how we can improve services or provide assistance as you so need.

9. Any upcoming IEP meetings will be done via phone, Face time and or Skype in accordance with their due dates.

Once normal school operations resume, we will consider necessary compensatory education for any special education student who misses services. Compensatory education services will be provide to any student who meets at least one of the below situations:

- a. The student does not have internet access in their home and/or
- b. The student does not have access to a digital device (i.e., laptop, phone, tablet)
- c. The EC Case Manager/therapist determines that the student's disability is such that remote learning is not appropriate or feasible.

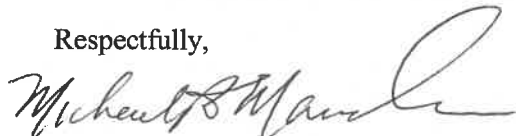
Compensatory education services will NOT be provided if a student has internet access and a digital device and is able to participate in remote learning but instead chooses not to participate in the remote learning lessons/activities.

In order for remote learning to be most effective, we need your cooperation and collaboration. It will always be best for parents to work alongside their student (especially for younger children or for children with more significant disabilities) during the video or online session provided by EC case managers and therapists and help their child with online or paper learning activities. Several EC Case Managers have discussed providing videos for parents on how to complete/provide specific reading, math or writing strategies and supports to their children during this time. Please discuss with your child's teacher during the weekly contacts how we can make the remote learning activities be most beneficial for you and your child.

We are all in this together and we need to all work together to make our remote learning opportunities and activities beneficial and worthwhile as possible for all our students. We look forward to collaborating with you and all parents and guardians to help our students continue to make progress on their IEP goals and in their general education classes (where applicable)

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation during this time of school closure. If you have any questions about this letter or our remote learning plans, please contact your child's EC Case Manager or me at any time. I can be reached at the Watauga County Schools Central Office at 175 Pioneer Trail in Boone or at 828-264-7190 or via email at marcelam@wataugaschools.org

Respectfully,



Michael R. Marcela, Ed.D

Exceptional Children Program Director