Accomplishments

The guiding principles of inclusive practice inform our programs, policies, practices, and services to reduce and minimize barriers to accessibility for people with disabilities. With 44% of our student population having some form of learning difference or challenge, we strive to create an accessible environment and ensure continuous improvement in accessibility.

There are several initiatives within our organization to identify, remove, and prevent barriers for people with challenges or disabilities:

1. Teachers work to accommodate all students, including those with diverse needs and disabilities, in their online and in-person classes. This includes supports such as extra time, flexible deadlines, alternative ways of accessing information (e.g. video), alternative ways of demonstrating learning, technology that allows for speech-to-text or text-to-speech and supports such as weighted animals, time timers, fidgets made available in classes.
2. HCOS and Flex Academy ensures that the Learning Commons offers an excellent selection of audio and digital books, particularly ensuring that any books that are used in courses or in book clubs are offered as audiobooks or graphic novels. This includes recommended resources on Universal Design for Learning (UDL).
3. The Learning Commons (LC) also offers subscriptions that support our diverse learners, including Hearbuilder, Touch Type Read and Spell (TTRS), RAZ-Plus, Read&Write, and Grammarly. Susan Barton is an Orton-Gillingham-based program that we also offer through our LC. Other subscriptions offered through the LC offer a variety of learning modalities - videos, games, the option to simply content or enlarge print. Additionally, the LC highlights supportive resources in each of their monthly newsletters.
4. The Student Success Centre offers the regular online support of multiple numeracy and literacy specialist Education Assistants to any HCOS and Flex Academy student. Students can book up to 2 hours a week per specialist and receive one-on-one support in their comprehension or executive functioning skills.
5. The Inclusive Education division at HCOS and Flex Academy also provides SEED, an online program that offers additional support - more teacher time, interaction, and scaffolding - for students requiring it.
6. Learning Groups (LG) work with teachers to facilitate individual student needs, noting effective supports that benefit learning. LG has also intentionally partnered with the Inclusive Education division to offer Learning Camps like “Hello, Anxiety” and “Virtual Voices” and Executive Functioning classes.
7. Study Forge, the HCOS curriculum department, is working to ensure that all their video content is close-captioned.
8. HCOS and Flex Academy also offers regular training to teachers and EAs, to build their supportive practice. Past training has included MANDT, Play is the Way, Dan Duncan (ADHD and Executive Functioning), and Non-violent Crisis Intervention. The Learning Support team also offers regular one-on-one coaching to teachers to help grow their skills and tool kit.

9. HCOS and Flex Academy offers graduation and staff meetings in alternative formats, for those who may be unable to attend in-person - offering an excellent online graduation and an in-person graduation experience and similarly offer online versions of in-person teacher/staff meetings; even Christmas parties have an online option. Students, in particular, have mentioned that they were thrilled to attend an online event where their health/mental health/finances/location/schedule would have made attending in-person unrealistic or impossible.
10. HCOS and Flex Academy has also recently updated the https://onlineschool.ca and https://flex.academy websites to increase simplicity and accessibility. This continues to be a work in progress, with the main website, Learning Groups site and a revamp of the Learning Commons website underway.
11. Accessibility is part of the planning process for the new Flex Academy campus. This is illustrated by the inclusion of structures in the new playground that allow those with physical disabilities to participate in play with their classmates.
12. HCOS and Flex Academy Inclusive Education (IE) Teachers collaborate with MCFD navigators to develop transition plans starting in grade 9 for students with developmental disabilities and develop a transition plan for all IE students in grades 9-12 as a part of their Individualized Education Plan.

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