

CENTENNIAL ACADEMY HELPS STUDENTS WITH LEARNING CHALLENGES DEVELOP THE SKILLS THEY NEED TO SUCCEED

Being the parent of a high school student can be stressful at the best of times. When that student has a learning challenge, it adds an entirely new type of stress.

"All parents want their children to succeed and be happy," said Angela Burgos, head of Centennial Academy. "So when a child is struggling to get through school, it can be extremely distressing."

Centennial's mission is to help students master their challenges of learning and graduate on time. By following the ongoing advances in the science of learning, using the latest technologies and techniques, and constantly reshaping itself to fit the evolving needs of its student population, Centennial has achieved impressive results.

"Over 90 per cent of our students graduate in five years and go on to college," Burgos stated. "That's

amazing, when you consider that over 90 per cent of our students have been diagnosed with one — or more — learning disabilities.

"When parents discover Centennial and meet with our team for the first time, you can sense their relief," Burgos said. "Most have spent years trying to manage their child's education — organizing tutoring, seeing specialists, and fighting over homework — but nothing has really worked. Both the parents and their child feel discouraged and overwhelmed."

Centennial's 200 or so students are regular teenagers, who come from all walks of life. Some love sports, some love science; others excel in art or music. They also happen to have a range of learning challenges, including ADHD, dysgraphia, dyslexia, and autism spectrum disorders. Despite their

different strengths and challenges, they all learn side-by-side in the same classrooms and have to meet the same rigorous academic and behavioural standards set by the Ministry of Education.

"Everything we do, from the way our school is structured to the way our classes are taught, is designed to remove unnecessary obstacles that get in the way of learning," Burgos explained. "For example, many of our students have difficulty with time management, planning, focusing and change. So we stick to a simple, Monday-to-Friday schedule, we adhere to predictable daily routines, we have teachers change classrooms instead of students, and we make all course materials and assignments available both on paper and online."

They also put a lot of emphasis on the development of good learning

behaviours — even more so than on good marks.

"Our goal is for our students to become autonomous and resilient learners — to be in control of their studies and not the other way around," Burgos said. "So we coach them to develop effective learning habits — like planning, preparation, and participation — until they become second nature. ... We teach them the importance of mindfulness, physical activity, balanced nutrition, lots of sleep, and regular routines. It sounds obvious, but it really makes a difference and helps our students stay on track."

Centennial's approach to homework is also unique: there is a homework period scheduled into every school day, and an extra "catch-up" homework period on Friday afternoon.

"At Centennial, our students do their most challenging assignments during their daily homework period, when they can get help from their teacher and peers. They still have work left to do at home, but it's easier things, like reading and reviewing."

Despite its success, Centennial is not content to rest on its laurels: the school will be opening its doors to French-speaking students in 2017.

"We've had more and more francophone parents coming to Centennial to see how they can get their child in. Some are quite desperate, because there are few alternatives for them," Burgos said. "So we made the decision to add a French-language sector to Centennial and we expect to have Secondary 1 and Secondary 2 classes up and running in the fall of 2017."

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CENTENNIAL ACADEMY

Open House
September 24, 2016,
10am to 3pm.



En
français dès
août 2017!

We don't see learning problems,
we see teaching challenges.

We are Centennial.

To learn more about Centennial Academy, visit our website and watch our video.

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