

Primer on Accessibility – Meeting the Needs of Exceptional Students

Date: September 16, 2020

Online learning has the inherent capability of supporting students with exceptionalities when set up with the student in mind. Giving the student control of when and how they learn is the first and one of the most significant ways to support students with exceptionalities. On top of this model and educational philosophy, many behind-the-scenes efforts can be taken to bring further support to students with exceptional learning needs. The following items are all strategies or tools Bayfield Design uses to ensure our online courses are accessible to all learners.

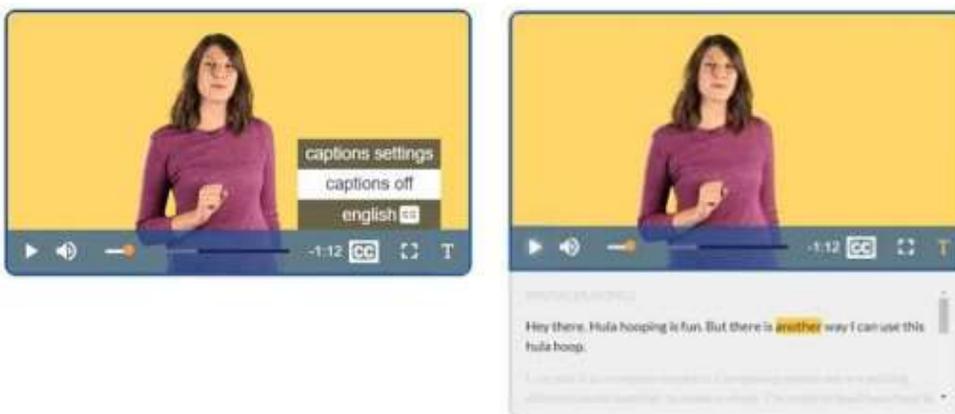
Bayfield Design was created from the content arm of Virtual High School. Our team has been developing online content for *all* learners since 1995.

Web Development

By following accessibility standards through www.W3.org, Bayfield Design has been able to design online courses with accessibility in mind. Focusing on this allows for additional tools and functionality to be available to all students. The sections below discuss this in more detail.

Videos

All videos developed are closed captioned and available to students through a custom video player. In addition, all videos are equipped with interactive transcripts for students to follow along, if desirable. Descriptive Audio is also offered on videos where visuals and content are not clearly identified in the dialogue or the text of the surrounding lesson. These videos meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) AA standards and are visually accessible.



Keyboard Accessibility

Bayfield Design builds all course content with the goal of it being keyboard accessible. This means that a student who is unable to use a mouse can navigate through the page and interactive page elements using their keyboard.

Screen Reader Compatible

Bayfield Design content is being developed with the goal of being completely screen reader compatible. Through using semantic mark up, important elements of pages, images, and text can all be read aloud to students who benefit from accessing the content in different modalities. This includes any PDF files used within or referenced by the course.

Multimedia

As discussed in the Web Development section, Bayfield Design's Multimedia team has made accessible development part of its mandate. Videos and graphics are designed to ensure they are accessible for all students. In addition to closed captioning and interactive transcripts in videos, the Bayfield Design multimedia team builds in the following practices to support accessibility.

Contrast Considerations

All graphic design elements, animations, and motion graphics content in Bayfield Design courses are reviewed for proper colour contrast. This ensures students with low vision can access the course content. Filmed footage and photography are also reviewed for contrast and accessibility. The only exception is when real life scenarios are portrayed and are key parts of a lesson or concept. In these cases, the content is supported by making it accessible as text within the lesson page.

Seizure Regulation Alignment

All video content produced by Bayfield Design is set to minimize the risk of seizures to individuals subject to photosensitive epilepsy. GIF's (short video content that automatically loops) are not used. Short looping videos, where needed, are displayed through a special multi-media player that gives the student the ability to stop, pause, and play content.

Summary

Using the right tools and educational philosophy, the needs of students with exceptionalities can not only be met, but exceeded. This is also just the beginning. While Bayfield Design strives to be at the leading edge, there is much more than can be done to enhance online learning experiences for students and we are excited to continue our work in this regard. Bayfield Design also welcomes opportunities to partner with any Boards of Education or other entities to support initiatives that could enhance the online learning experience for all learners.

Staff at Bayfield Design have been working closely with all type of online learners over the past 19 years, both as content developers and as teachers with the Virtual High School.