

2.1.4 New Brunswick

The only officially bilingual province in Canada, New Brunswick has a population of 748,319 (Statistics Canada, 2009). Approximately a third of the population is Francophone. The province has a total area of just over 72,908 km². This gives New Brunswick a population density of 10.50 /km². The capital is Fredericton, which has a little over 10% of the province's population. New Brunswick has two other main urban areas: Moncton and Saint John; however, these three metropolitan areas still only comprise approximately 45% of the population — making New Brunswick one of the more evenly distributed provincial populations.

K-12 Online Learning

Category	Yes/No	Comments
Province-led programme	Yes	One English / One French
Other online programmes	No	
Provincial-level policy	Yes	Policy documents

Online Programmes

There are two online learning programmes in New Brunswick, one for the Anglophone school system and one for the Francophone school system. The Ministry of Education administers both programmes, although each programme has its own independent staff and structure within the Ministry. Information concerning implementation policies and course load is shared between the two programmes. The online learning programmes for both languages use the same learning management system hosted by the Ministry.

The majority of students are enrolled in a high school in New Brunswick and elect to complete, with school approval, one or more online courses. A registrar in each of the province's high schools enrolls the student in one or more of the online courses available using an on line enrolment system. The Ministry's programme manager then informs the distance teacher of the enrolment information. The online teacher then communicates with the high school student ongoing until the course is completed. Each student has a local facilitator who is a local teacher who helps keep the student on pace in the course and serves as the communications link with the online teacher who provides weekly updates on progress. The school is informed of the final mark and places the mark in the schools' Student Information System where it shows on the student transcript. The Ministry, through this online learning programme, can also accommodate students traveling out of the country or with medical reasons for not attending a regular classroom. Enrolments in the English online learning programme over the past three years have varied from 2,598 in 2006-07 to 2,911 in 2007-08 to 2,010 in 2008-09.

The Ministry also allows classroom teachers to use online courses with their face-to-face students. This is now a much more popular option. It allows the classroom teacher to use all or just parts of the course with their students. It is especially well suited for professional development purposes with teachers who may be teaching the course for the first time. Over the past three years, enrolments in the English programme went from 1,434 in 2006-07 to 1,763 in 2007-08 to 1,933 in 2008-09.

Finally, the Ministry also sells access to online courses to other jurisdictions including private school students in other countries and sometimes in other provinces.

Provincial Policies

At present there are no specific legislation or regulations that govern K-12 online learning in New Brunswick. The system operates based on collaboration between the Ministry of Education and individual school districts.

Funding

The Ministry funds the learning management system, course development and the cost of online teachers centrally through our e-learning Branch. There is no registration fee, so schools and students are able to access the provincial online learning programmes at no direct cost to them.

Governance, Tracking, and Accountability

While there is no legislation or regulation governing K-12 online learning, the Ministry has established a policy handbook that outlines the administrative procedures. It also provides a detailed description of “The Distance Learning Team”, which is designed to include personnel at the Ministry of Education, the school district, and the school. In addition to describing the individual team members at each of these levels, a detailed list of specific responsibilities are provided (and included in the school personnel is both the distance learner and the parent/guardian, with similar lists of responsibilities). Much of this information is provided at the New Brunswick’s Distance Learning programme website (under the “Responsibilities” tab).

The Ministry has the ability to track the performance of online students, and could make comparisons of students’ performance and retention based on delivery model. However, it appears that these calculations are not made on a regular basis.

Quality Assurance, Teaching, and Curriculum

For the selection of teachers, each language sector manages their own online learning programme. For example, the English distance programme uses classroom teachers who are seconded from school districts to the Ministry. These online teachers work from school or home.

Courses for the English distance programme are developed centrally by using content specialists and the Ministry’s in-house development team. The French programme contracts out to the University of Moncton, who has a development team that provides this development service while the Ministry provides access to the subject specialist and helps to manage the development process. The course content is developed to have a consistent look and feel. Feedback from students after they finish the online course, along with interaction with their online and face-to-face teachers using the course content provide the Ministry with evaluation data for their course development.