



Newfoundland and Labrador

Population – 508,990
 Total Area – 405,212 km²
 Population Density – 1.26 people/km²
 Capital (Population) – St. John's (100,646)
 Number of K-12 Schools – 279 (2009-10)
 Number of K-12 Students – 69,665 (2009-10)

Geographically speaking, Canada's most easterly province—Newfoundland and Labrador—is composed of two landmasses: the island of Newfoundland and the mainland portion of Labrador. While only 20% of the population lives in the capital, approximately 60% of the population of the province resides within a 90-minute drive of the capital.

K-12 Online Learning

Category	Yes/No	Comments
Province-led programme	Yes	
Other online programmes	No	
Provincial-level policy	No	

Online Programmes

K-12 distance education was introduced to the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador in 1988-89, with the delivery of a single advanced mathematics course using a telematics or audiographics delivery system. The initial course had an enrolment of 36 students from 13 rural schools (Barbour, 2005). By 1999-2000, this province-wide programme offered 11 courses to 703 students in 77 different rural schools, with an enrolment of 898 (Brown, Sheppard, & Stevens, 2000). This programme began to be phased out in 2000-01 when the Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation (CDLI) came into existence—based on the recommendation of a ministerial panel (Sparkes & Williams, 2000). The CDLI began its curricular offerings 2001-02, with 10 courses field-tested in 10 districts (i.e., one course per district) and a total of 200 student enrolments from 76 different rural schools. After the initial field test, the CDLI expanded its course offerings so that students from all over the province could access any course. Over the past nine years, the CDLI has increased its offerings to approximately 38 courses. Since 2005-06 they have had an annual enrolment of approximately 1,500 students from around 100 different schools (e.g., 2007-08 – 1,787; 2008-09 – 1,616; 2009-10 – 1,481).

The CDLI utilises a combination of synchronous and asynchronous instruction for each of their online courses. For the synchronous instruction, the CDLI has teachers that provide, depending on the subject area, anywhere from 30% to 80% of the students' scheduled time (which is 10-one hour

periods over a fourteen day cycle) in synchronous instruction using *Illuminate*[®]. Participating schools must align their schedules with the specific CDLI schedule for their region to ensure that students' class time in their brick-and-mortar schools matches with the CDLI's synchronous class times. The asynchronous instruction is conducted using a course management system (*Desire2Learn*[®]).³

In addition to their high school offerings, the CDLI has ventured into providing online instructional support to the lower grades. For example, Murphy (2009) described a project where the CDLI provided a blended learning environment for four grade six French-language teachers located in one urban and three rural schools. The blended learning environment allowed the teachers to pool their resources while students completed classroom-based, along with synchronous and asynchronous lessons online.

Finally, the CDLI continues to be the most researched K-12 distance education entity in Canada. The CDLI has been one of the main research partners for the Killick Centre at Memorial University of Newfoundland, which has released a series of research studies as a part of their federal grant. In addition, independent researchers have consistently investigated the programme since its inception (e.g., Barbour, 2007b, 2008; Barbour & Cooze, 2004; Barbour & Mulcahy, 2004, 2008, 2009; Cooze & Barbour, 2005; Mulcahy, 2002; Mulcahy, Dibbon & Norberg, 2008).

Governance and Regulation

At present, the CDLI is not a separate school or entity. Rather it operates within the Planning and Educational Programmes Branch of the Ministry of Education. It receives a block grant from the provincial Government that funds the administration, overhead and course development activities of the online programme. One of the items included in the CDLI overhead is the placement and maintenance of computers and other support equipment that the CDLI provides to all of the schools that participate in its programme. The CDLI also receives a direct allocation of teaching units from the provincial Government to hire teachers for their online courses.

At this time there is no language in the *Education Act* related to K-12 distance education. There are also no policies or regulation specifically related to K-12 distance education within the Ministry of Education, although in response to the 2009 report the CDLI did indicate that work was being done in this area (although there is no evidence that this work has been completed or made public at this stage).

The Ministry of Education continues to track the method of delivery that students complete their studies. This allows for comparisons of student performance between the students who take their courses via distance education and those enrolled in the face-to-face environment (e.g., Crocker, 2009). Data related to distance education enrolment are available through the *K-12 School Profile System*, while data on student performance are available from the Ministry upon request.

³ Barbour (2007a) provides an extensive description of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador and its rural nature, along with a history of the development distance education, and a detailed description of the Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation and its delivery model.