



4.5 Quebec

Population – 7,903,001

Total Area – 1,542,056 km²

Population Density – 5.13 people/km²

Capital (Population) – Quebec City (516,622)

Number of K–12 Schools – 3105 (2010–11⁶)

Number of K–12 Students – 1,003,138 (2010–2011)

Number of K–12 Distance Education Programmes – 3

Number of K–12 Distance Education Students – ~30,000

K–12 Distance Education Policy – None

Distance Programs

The use of correspondence distance education has been in place in Quebec since 1946. By 1996 this program had evolved into the *Société de formation à distance des commissions scolaires du Québec* (SOFAD), a not-for-profit organization tasked with the development and production of distance learning materials that school boards utilize in their own district-based programs for adult students. During the 2010–11 school year, 25,171 students took one or more distance education courses using SOFAD materials. A second distance education program began in 1999, which expanded to include all nine English-speaking school boards in 2006. Learn provided a variety of distance learning opportunities to approximately 5300 English-language students during the 2010–11 school year. Finally, in 2002 the *Écoles éloignées en réseau* or Remote Networked Schools initiative began focusing on teacher professional development and technology integration projects (e.g., linking two or more small rural classes together through electronic means). Since June 2012, this initiative has been rebranded as simply *Écoles en réseau* or Networked Schools. Between 2010 and 2012, 218 teachers in 162 schools have connected 3000 students through using *Knowledge Forum* and other electronic tools (e.g., video conferencing and synchronous online tools).

It appears there may be other K-12 distance education programs operating in the province. For example, the Eastern Township School Board ran an online program with students who were associated with the *Cirque du Soleil* schools located in various parts of the globe (e.g., Tokyo, Rio de Janeiro, etc.). Essentially, a teacher in Quebec would connect synchronously with a teaching aide in the remote locations where the *Cirque du Soleil* were performing, and the teaching aide would assist the small number of students who were taking courses (primarily at the elementary school level). It appears that the scope of this program may be diminishing at present. Further, the *Commission scolaire Beauce-Étchemin* has developed some distance education courses to service the adult and vocational education sectors. Unfortunately, the Ministry of Education, Recreation and Sports does not collect information on any of these distance education programs, and no contact was established with representatives from either of these two initiatives.

Governance and Regulation

The Education Act in Quebec makes no reference to distance education. Since 1995 school boards have held the primary responsibility for distance education policies and regulations. In Fall 2011,

7 The statistics for the 2011–12 school year have yet to be released.

the Deputy Minister of Education tasked *Le centre facilitant la recherche et l'innovation dans les organisations, à l'aide des technologies de l'information et de la communication* (CEFRIO) with examining issues related the use of digital content and tools in K–12 schools. CEFRIO created an advisory committee, which submitted its report in June 2012 outlining recommendations on the management of digital content, the integration of digital resources, and the delivery of digital materials (including e-learning). However, late in the summer Premier Jean Charest triggered an election that was held in early September. The election of a minority *Parti Québécois* government will mean a change to the Minister of Education, which will likely have an impact on how the recommendations from this group are received and the potential course of action for the future.

Interprovincial and International

If a student living in Quebec completes a distance education course from a program located in another province or territory, provided the student has an official document (e.g., transcript) issued from the jurisdiction in question attesting to the student's successful course completion, the process is the same as for a student transferring from another jurisdiction. The student contacts the *Service d'accueil et de référence* in order to have his or her online course evaluated for equivalent units from the Quebec high school diploma. If the distance education course is from a program in another country, the process is the same but the Department of Immigration and Cultural Communities conducts the evaluation of the course.

In instances where a student living in another province or territory—or even another country—takes a course from an online program located in Quebec, the Ministry of Education does not fund the student. Distance education programs are free to charge tuition to these students. Further, in order to obtain credit for their distance education courses, non-resident students must still write in-person ministerial examinations available only in the schools of Quebec.