

## 3.12 Northwest Territories (NT)

*Population: 44,381*

*Number of K-12 Schools: 49*

*Number of K-12 Students: 8,449*

*Number of K-12 E-Learning Programs: 1*

*Number of K-12 E-Learning Students: 79*



### Governance and Regulation

The *Education Act, 2009* allows various educational bodies to “authorize, supervise and evaluate the use of distance learning programs in the provision of the education program” (p. 72). The Department of Education, Culture and Employment defines distance learning as the deliberate use of the Internet, the World Wide Web, and landlines to leverage communication tools, learning management systems, and resources to overcome geographic obstacles to accessing brick-and-mortar courses, disciplinary expertise, and student cohort formation. Since 2004, the Department has had a Memorandum of Understanding with the Alberta Distance Learning Centre (ADLC), which has historically been the main provider of distance education for Northwest Territories students. Additionally, section 3.3 of the *Northwest Territories School Handbook* outlines a series of requirements that schools must adhere to in order to participate in distance learning. While the document is primarily focused on describing distance learning and specific operational items related to school participation in the ADLC, it does recommend that schools have a dedicated online facilitator, scheduled distance learning time in student timetables, a plan for students to complete courses in a timely manner, and access to additional relevant resources.

Distance learning is funded differently than traditional brick-and-mortar. Since 2010, the regional boards of education are responsible for funding courses taken through the ADLC. Additionally, there is a formula fund called *Secondary School Materials and Distance Learning*, of which the Northern Distance Learning (NDL) program (i.e., the territory’s own distance learning pilot) shares a portion of this fund. The remainder of the funding is generated through contribution agreements with participating Divisional Educational Councils.

Finally, the Northwest Territories is currently renewing its system of education through a process called *Education Renewal and Innovation* (ERI). One commitment under ERI is to improve the learning experience of students in its smallest communities, regardless of geographical location.

### K-12 Distance and Online Learning Activity

The NDL program is currently in the fourth year of its pilot initiative. NDL teachers are based in Inuvik, typically with a small number of students from the host school enrolled in classes taught by these

teachers. Students in the seven other schools participating in the program access the course material online from their respective schools with the help of a local support person, and interact with the teacher and classmates through live videoconferencing. During the 2016-17 school year there were 51 students enrolled in the NDL.

Additionally, there were approximately 28 students enrolled in distance learning courses offered through the ADLC during the 2015-2016 school year (as 2016-17 data was unavailable).

It should be noted the territorial government has made the development of and support for building its internal distance learning capacity a priority. This priority is evidenced by the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment's published mandate stating the government is committed to "expanding the [territory's] distance learning pilot project to increase access for [territorial] senior secondary students in all communities" (Government of the Northwest Territories, 2016, p. 2).

### **K-12 Blended Learning Activity**

The Department of Education, Culture and Employment defines blended learning as a formal education program where students learn in part through online delivery of content and instruction, and in part in a brick-and-mortar setting. Students in such a program have some measure of control over time, path and place.

In order to benefit fully from more of an asynchronous type of distance learning programming, the government recognizes the need for territorial students to develop a greater sense of agency, ownership, and self-direction in their high school experience. NDL is developing programming that systematically 'replaces' live classes with fully asynchronous classes in the learning management system, which could also be used by classroom teachers in blended learning.

At present, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment is not able to report any additional information related to blended learning.