



Quebec (QC)

Population: 8,263,600

Number of K-12 Schools: 3,102

Number of K-12 Students: 1,003,322

Number of K-12 E-Learning Programs: 5+

Number of K-12 E-Learning Students: ~50,000+

Governance and Regulation

Historically, school boards have held the primary responsibility for distance education policies and regulations. In fact, the *Loi sur l'instruction publique* prevents any formal full-time online learning (and relegates supplemental online learning programs to being a provider that must cooperate with the brick-and-mortar schools). A 2017 amendment to the *Loi sur l'instruction publique* (i.e., Bill 144) allowed the Minister to authorize pilot projects that would permit students, both those who were registered with a school board and those who were homeschooled, to enrol in online courses offered by a recognized school board. However, homeschooled students are still required to write their final year-end exams at a school board location. These pilot projects could last up to five years under the amendment, and the Minister is asked to make and publish an evaluation of the pilot project every two years and an evaluation at the end of the pilot project.

Some of these changes are driven by the *Digital Action Plan for Education and Higher Education*, which was launched in 2018. The goal of the plan is “effective integration and optimal use of digital technologies to foster the success of all Quebecers in order to promote lifelong skills development and maintenance” (Ministry of Education and Higher Education, 2018, p. 9). The plan has three stated orientations:

1. support the development of the digital skills of young people and adults;
2. make use of digital technologies to enhance teaching and learning practices; and
3. create an environment conducive to the development of digital technologies in the education system. (p. 1)

Embedded within the second orientation is the specific objective to “foster the development of distance education offerings based on needs at the various levels of education” (p. 46). It was this objective that spurred the passage of Bill 144, and brought an increased focus on the *RÉseau axé sur le développement des Compétences des élèves par l'Intégration des Technologies de l'information et de la communication* (RÉCIT) services and products.

Private schools are regulated by a different act (i.e., *Loi sur l'enseignement privé*) that does contain provisions pertaining to online education. Essentially a private school can request a “derogation” allowing students to be “virtually attending,” which would in theory allow for the formal creation of a virtual school. To date, the Ministry has yet to receive a request for an online initiative that meets the conditions stated in the *Loi sur l'enseignement privé* for them to approve.

The government provides school boards funding for distance education students based upon enrolment at a rate of 80% of the amount provided for a student enrolled in a brick-and-mortar setting. The *Ministère de l'éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur* does provide a block grant to the *Société de formation à distance des commissions scolaires du Québec* (SOFAD) to support their course development activities. Additionally, SOFAD also charged a fee for school boards to use their materials, money that was reinvested in the development of other learning materials. Similarly, the Leading English Education and Resource Network (LEARN) program is largely funded through the Canada-Quebec Entente on minority language education and second-language instruction, which is a funding program managed by the *Ministère de l'éducation et de l'enseignement supérieur*.

K-12 Distance and Online Learning Activity

During the 2018-19 school year, there was one pilot projects under the Bill 144 provisions currently underway in a Francophone school board.

Additionally, there were three known distance learning programs in Quebec. The largest distance education program was SOFAD, which primarily develops and produces correspondence distance learning materials that school boards utilize in their own district-based programs. SOFAD served approximately 30,000 adult students who are 16 years or older. LEARN provided a variety of distance learning opportunities to all nine English-speaking school boards in the province, including approximately 230 students who received direct course credits, 124 through day-time online classes and 104 through a summer school program. Additionally, approximately 1,200 students were provided online tutoring support services and the demand continues to grow. Finally, the Quebec Online School reported an enrollment of 23 students.

K-12 Blended Learning Activity

At present, there are two known programs that provide blended learning in Quebec. In addition to their distance offerings, LEARN provides its services and resources – such as tutoring, tailored pedagogical content, training, community learning centres' support, academic peer review articles, curated resources, and enrichment activities – to stakeholders across the province in a blended format. As of the 2018-19 school year, LEARN no longer tracked the number of students accessing their resources so it is difficult to report an accurate figure for blended learning. However, during the 2017-18 school year an estimated 10,000 or more students accessed the blended learning content outside of LEARN's content management system, and this number has continued to grow. There has been no recent data submitted on the *Écoles en réseau* (i.e., Networked Schools), although the program appears to remain active.

References

Ministry of Education and Higher Education. (2018). *Digital action plan for education and higher education*. Quebec City, QC: Government of Québec. Retrieved from http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site_web/documents/ministere/PAN_Plan_action_VA.pdf