



Quebec (QC)

Population: 8,572,054

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: ~55,000+

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 2019-20 school year, there was at least one pilot project under the Bill 144 provisions currently underway, but the Ministry was unable to provide any details or data on any pilot project(s).

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 an estimated 30,000 or more 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 250 students who received direct course credits. Additionally, the Quebec Online School reported an enrollment of 25 students. Finally, it is believed that the Beauce-Etchemin School Board continues to operate the *Centre d'apprentissage en ligne de la CSBE*, but the most recent data indicated that this program served approximately 1,500 students five years ago.

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. During the 2019-20 school year an estimated 14,000 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.

Emergency Remote Teaching

Schools closed on March 16, 2020 and remote teaching began on March 30. The Ministry of Education launched their remote teaching resource website, and partnered with the publicly-funded educational television network to provide online television programming for preschool to secondary students; education kits were also available to students with limited internet access.

There were no specified attendance expectations, and the final report cards delivered were based on the first two reporting periods of the school year. Elementary students were able to return to school on May 11, with the exception of the Montreal area, but secondary students continued with remote learning.

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