



Nova Scotia (NS)

Population: 998 832

Number of K-12 Schools: 370

Number of K-12 Students: 125,124

Number of K-12 E-Learning Programs: 2

Number of K-12 E-Learning Students: ~122,756

Governance and Regulation

The provision of distributed learning (i.e., distance education and online learning) through the Nova Scotia Virtual School (NSVS) is governed by provisions included in the agreement between the Government of Nova Scotia and the Nova Scotia Teachers Union. This collective agreement defines distributed learning as:

a method of instruction that relies primarily on communication between students and teachers through the internet or other electronic-based delivery, teleconferencing, video conferencing or e-correspondence. It allows teachers, students, and content to be located in different, non-centralized locations so that instruction and learning can occur independent of time and place. (Government of Nova Scotia, 2020, p. 54)

In addition to defining distributed learning, there are several clauses related to distributed learning teacher working conditions (e.g., requirement that the teacher be certified; requirement that distributed learning be considered part of the teacher's formal workload; maximum distributed learning class size; mandated professional development for distributed learning teachers; and distributed learning school day can be different, but must be equivalent).

Further, the collective agreement outlines a number of responsibilities for the schools and/or school boards that choose to operate distributed learning programs:

- schools must have student supervision at the local level when students are engaged in distributed learning;
- schools must have a local distributed learning coordinator; and
- if the course exists in the student's local school, they must receive approval from the school in order to take the course in a distributed learning environment.

Finally, there is a clause that creates a formal mechanism to allow for consultations between distributed learning program operators and the union through a provincial advisory committee.

K-12 Distance and Online Learning Activity

The Learning Resources and Technology Services division of the Education Innovation, Programs and Services branch of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development manages distance education programs in Nova Scotia and works cooperatively

with a Management Board representing all Regional Centres for Education and *Conseil scolaire acadien provincial*.

There are two distance education programs in the province. First, the NSVS provided online courses to approximately 1,919 students from the seven English-speaking regional centres and the *Conseil scolaire acadien provincial* during the 2020-21 school year. Second, the Correspondence Studies Program provided 953 new course enrollments to 637 students. At the end of the 2020-21 school year, ~1,400 students were active in the Correspondence Studies Program, which is not constrained by the timelines of the typical school year. In the coming school year, work is ongoing to transition from traditional correspondence courses to an online delivery format.

K-12 Blended Learning Activity

A number of eLearning initiatives have also been implemented in the school system for students enrolled in traditionally in-person courses. For example, *Google Workspace for Education (G-Suite)* is available to all students, teachers, and administrators province-wide, and ~123 000 students (including Pre-Primary or pre-K and returning graduates) have active accounts. Most in-person classes continued to use Google Classroom as their eLearning hub in 2020-21, allowing organization of digital materials used in class, communication, and the ability to transition to learning from home as needed. In addition, all grade 9 students participate in a blended learning component on financial literacy as part of the Citizenship Education 9 course. Further, the Department provides a blended eLearning platform through the *Moodle* learning management system that is extensively used in classes around the province to share resources, support instruction, and to support professional learning communities for teachers.

Remote Learning

Spring 2020 Closure

Schools in Nova Scotia closed on March 15, 2020. The Ministry of Education and Early Childhood Development provided literacy, numeracy, and mental health resources for students, parents, and guardians. Additionally, five learning packages were provided between April 8 and June 3, 2020. *Google Classroom* and *Learn360* platforms were used to connect with students, share content, and assess learning. Chromebooks were distributed to students and those with no or limited internet were provided with learning packages via a province-wide newspaper. Attendance expectations for remote learning were five hours per week for kindergarten to grade 6, ten hours for grades 7-9, and three hours per course per week for grades 10-12. All provincial standardized tests were cancelled and final grades issued on report cards were based on work assigned and completed (Nagle et al., 2020a).

Fall 2020 Reopening

The Fall 2020-21 school year began without delays with a full reopening that included health measures that included cohort groupings, physical distancing, outdoor classes used as much as possible, a reconfiguration of classroom space, and signage to regulate student movement. No

large school gatherings (i.e., assemblies and cafeterias) were permitted. Masks were mandatory for grades 4-12. Diagnostic assessments were planned for the start of the year to gauge student learning and to assist teachers to better understand the learning needs of their students, but provincial assessments were cancelled (Nagle et al., 2020b).

2020-21 School Year

Schools were open to in-person learning until April 28, 2021, when schools closed due to rising COVID-19 cases. On May 19th the province decided to keep schools closed for the rest of the year, but in-school learning began again for some areas starting June 3. The remote learning instructional model was a mix of asynchronous and synchronous with a minimum set of one hour synchronous and two hours asynchronous for kindergarten to grade 3 per day, increasing by 30-minute increments for each of grades 4-6 and 7-9. For grades 10-12, there was up to 50% of their school day as synchronous. All assessments and reporting continued as per a regular school year and teachers had access to an eLearning site developed by the Nova Scotia Government. Students who needed assistive technology were provided with devices with a priority given to marginalized and racialized communities. Students without internet access were offered other options such as the delivery of USB with learning materials (Nagle et al., 2021).

References

Government of Nova Scotia. (2020). *Agreement between the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development of the Province of Nova Scotia and the Nova Scotia Teachers Union*. <https://nstu.blob.core.windows.net/nstuwebsite/data/agreements/TPA%202019-2023%20-%20Final.pdf>

Nagle, J., Barbour, M. K., & LaBonte, R. (2020a). *Documenting triage: Detailing the response of provinces and territories to emergency remote teaching*. Canadian eLearning Network. <https://secureservercdn.net/198.71.233.227/sgf.292.myftpupload.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Documenting-Triage-canelearn-emergency-remote-teaching-report1.pdf>

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