



Northwest Territories (NT)

Population: 44,826

Number of K-12 Schools: 49

Number of K-12 Students: 8,700

Number of K-12 E-Learning Programs: 1

Number of K-12 E-Learning Students: 216

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. The Department had a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Alberta Distance Learning Centre (ADLC) from 2004 to 2021, or until the ADLC ceased operation. The Department has plans to use the Vista Virtual School from the Calgary Board of Education for future distance learning capacity.

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 schools 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.

Finally, the Northwest Territories is nearing the end of its 10 year education renewal process (called *Education Renewal and Innovation*). The territorial government has made the development of and support for building its internal distance learning capacity a priority (see <https://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/en/services/education-renewal/northern-distance-learning>), along with the achievement of student outcomes to the same level as the rest of Canada. The Northern Distance Learning (NDL), which is a partnership with the Beaufort Delta Divisional Education Council and the Government of the Northwest Territories, is expected to play a significant part in achieving those priorities. NDL will undergo a formal evaluation in 2023-2025.

K-12 Distance and Online Learning Activity

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 15 other schools 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 videoconferencing. The program uses Moodle for its learning management system. During the 2020-21 school year 92 students were enrolled in NDL courses. However, each board is also funded to make distance learning choices.

Additionally, during the 2020-21 school year there were approximately 124 grades 9-12 students enrolled in distance learning courses offered through the ADLC.

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. This definition is consistent with this study's description of online distance learning, and, accordingly, consistent with the NDL as discussed in the previous section. There were no additional data related to blended learning provided.

Remote Learning

Spring 2020 Closure

Schools in the Northwest Territories closed on March 16, 2020. The government created a *Continuity of Learning* document to support teachers through planning for remote teaching and learning that included a curated list of resources for each age and grade level. A government webpage offered information for parents and guardians to assist their children with remote teaching. Students with limited access to the internet had paper-based assignments and for homes with access to the internet, suggested technologies were *Google Classroom, Moodle, Facebook Live, GoToMeeting, Skype, and Zoom*. Communication also consisted of local radio stations or telephone, and radio stations were made available to provide lessons through storytelling. The attendance expectation for students to engage in remote teaching included K-3 with three hours per week, grades 4-6 with five hours per week, grades 7-9 with seven hours per week, and grades 10-12 with three hours per course per week. All achievement testing was cancelled and report cards were distributed (Nagle et al., 2020a).

Fall 2020 Reopening

There was no delay to the start of the 2020-21 school year which started with in-school learning. Increased health measures included regular classes with learning 'bubbles' for grades K-6 with no physical distancing within the bubble and physical distancing for grades 7-9 of one meter and two meters for school staff as well as grades 8-12 students. There were controlled entries and exits for student traffic flow, staggered lunches and recess, spacing of desks and furniture, no large assemblies or gatherings, and outdoor activities as much as possible. Masks were not mandatory for in-class and masks were used when physical distancing could not be achieved. The curriculum was to be delivered as usual, and learning shifts were a possibility, where secondary students attended in the morning or afternoons on alternating days (Nagle et al., 2020b).

2020-21 School Year

The 2020-21 school year proceeded with in-person learning but the provincial capital of Yellowknife closed schools and returned to emergency remote learning on May 3, 2021, which was lifted May 17. Both in-school, blended, and remote learning (i.e., for students needing to self-isolate) were options for the 2020-2021 school year. During blended learning, students attend in-school in the morning and then remotely in the afternoon to complete schoolwork online or with paper learning packages. Working on the land was also an option during remote learning. Assessments and reporting continued as usual regardless of the learning model and students who needed assistive technologies had access to these supports (Nagle et al., 2021).

References

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>

Nagle, J., Barbour, M. K., & LaBonte, R. (2021). *Toggling between lockdowns: Canadian responses for continuity of learning in the 2020-21 school year*. Canadian eLearning Network. <https://secureservercdn.net/198.71.233.153/sgf.292.myftpupload.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/canelearn-2020-21-school-year.pdf>

Nagle, J., LaBonte, R., & Barbour, M. K. (2020b). *A fall like no other: Between basics and preparing for an extended transition during turmoil*. Canadian eLearning Network. <https://secureservercdn.net/198.71.233.227/sgf.292.myftpupload.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/A-Fall-Like-No-Other-canelearn-remote-teaching-report2.pdf>