

State of the Nation: K-12 e-Learning in Canada

2021 Edition

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Executive Summary

The 14th issue of the annual *State of the Nation: K–12 e-Learning in Canada* study describes the changes that have occurred in relation to e-Learning governance and activity over the past year. Jurisdictional profiles describe activity and nature of governance for each province and territory, as well as for Indigenous programs under federal jurisdiction. Like previous publications, this issue describes only changes that have occurred in relation to the governance and e-Learning activity while full jurisdictional profiles remain on the project research website. It also provides descriptions of the remote learning that began at the start of the 2020-21 school year drawn from the Canadian eLearning Network’s “Remote Learning Research Project,” which was designed to delineate how each jurisdiction managed their response to the pandemic and school closures.

Distance or online learning enrolment remained stable across the country, with many jurisdictions reporting an increase in the number of students enrolled in programs. Western Canada still has the largest level of student participation in online programs with Atlantic Canada has the lowest level of participation. During the 2020-21 school year, British Columbia was the only jurisdiction to experience changes in their regulatory framework. Legislative changes to both the *School Act* and the *Independent School Act* updated terminology from distributed learning to online learning and allowed school districts and independent school authorities to offer online learning courses and programs to in-district’ students without an agreement with the Ministry (but will still need one to enrol out-of-district students or for cross-enrolment). Additionally, the requirement that Ontario students had to take two online courses to graduate from secondary school came into effect during the 2020-21 school year but the Ministry of Education announced that all secondary students would receive credit for having taken one online course due to the remote learning that occurred during the 2020-21 school year. The implementation of many of the other changes in other jurisdictions have been delayed until or have been planned for the 2021-22 school year or the 2022-23 school year.

For the most part the school year was dominated by the pandemic, school closures, and remote learning. Instead of benefiting from the experience of their online learning programs and educators, many jurisdictions scrambled to reinvent what had already existed in successful, existing e-Learning infrastructure. Some jurisdictions did rely on their existing online learning programs that resulted in an increase in enrolment, but did not necessarily negate the need for remote learning during school closures. Finally, some jurisdictions developed models of instructional delivery that had not previously existed (or had only existed in the most isolated cases). However, overall what occurred in most jurisdictions when school closures were required was still remote learning — and not online learning — because it was still viewed as temporary in nature. It remained an attempt to project a classroom instructional model to students at a distance with limited success.

The *State of the Nation: K–12 e-Learning in Canada* report, and its accompanying publications on its project website, provides critical information and insight into how Canadian educational authorities and governments are integrating technology-supported approaches to prepare students for today’s economy and a future society in which the use of technology will be ubiquitous. The report and website provide a benchmark for educators and offers background, guidance, and ideas for the improvement of policy and practice in online and blended learning.

1. Introduction

This report details the results of the fourteenth annual *State of the Nation: K–12 e-Learning in Canada* study. Since 2018 this report has simply described the changes that have occurred in relation to e-Learning governance and activity over the past year. The standard jurisdictional profiles (i.e., the annual update of activity and nature of governance for each province and territory, as well as for Indigenous programs under federal jurisdiction) have continued to be released in full on the *State of the Nation: K–12 e-Learning in Canada* website, which can be accessed at: <https://k12sotn.ca/>

The 2020 *State of the Nation: K–12 e-Learning in Canada* report began with a caution for readers related to COVID-19 and the differences between K–12 distance and online learning and the pandemic-induced remote learning. At the time, we stated that:

...no accounting of the past school year would be complete without some comment on the global pandemic that was declared by the World Health Organization on 11 March 2020. Within days jurisdictions all around the world began to close schools, and Canada was no different. The annual *State of the Nation: K–12 e-Learning in Canada* study is designed to examine K–12 distance, online, and blended learning. Distance, online, and blended learning requires purposeful instructional planning, using a systematic model of administrative procedures, and course development. It also requires the careful consideration of various pedagogical strategies. These pedagogical considerations are used to determine which are best suited to the specific affordances and challenges of delivery mediums and the purposeful selection of tools based on the strengths and limitations of each one. Finally, careful planning requires that teachers be appropriately trained to be able to support the tools that are being used, and for teachers to be able to effectively use those tools to help facilitate student learning.

However, as Hodges et al. (2020) argued, “‘emergency remote teaching’ has emerged as a common alternative term used by online education researchers and professional practitioners to draw a clear contrast with what many of us know as high-quality online education” (para. 6). Hodges and his colleagues described [remote learning] as:

a temporary shift of instructional delivery to an alternate delivery mode due to crisis circumstances. It involves the use of fully remote teaching solutions for instruction or education that would otherwise be delivered face-to-face or as blended or hybrid courses and that will return to that format once the crisis or emergency has abated. The primary objective in these circumstances is not to re-create a robust educational ecosystem but rather to provide temporary access to instruction and instructional supports in a manner that is quick to set up and is reliably available during an emergency or crisis. (para. 13)

As [remote learning] is temporary in nature, it is generally beyond the confines of an annual study focused on planned distance, online, and blended learning¹. But we would be remiss if it was excluded altogether.

¹ *The State of the Nation: K–12 e-Learning in Canada special report entitled Understanding Pandemic Pedagogy: Differences Between Emergency Remote, Remote, and Online Teaching examined the differences between online learning, remote learning, and emergency remote teaching from a K–12 perspective (see Barbour et al., 2020).*

Everything that we wrote last year is still applicable. While not as drastic as what occurred in Spring 2020, the 2020-21 school year was still impacted by the on-going pandemic. In some cases this impact involved school closures and the need to revert to some form of hybrid and/or remote learning. However, in other cases it meant an increase in the number of K-12 e-Learning programs that were available and/or the level of participation in those programs. While we provide a brief summary of the remote learning that occurred during the 2020-21 school year, a more detailed discussion of this pandemic pedagogy can be found at Canadian eLearning Network's "Remote Learning Research Project."²

Finally, it is important to remind the reader that historically this report has been prepared throughout the fall following the school year that is being examined. For example, as this report is examining the 2020-21 school year, during normal times the report would be written in September, October, and — sometimes — November. During these normal time periods the report would be published before the end of the calendar year (i.e., the report for the 2020-21 school year would be published before the end of 2021). However, the past two years have not been normal times. Both the 2020 report covering the 2019-20 school year and this 2021 report covering the 2020-21 school year have been delayed well into the next calendar year. It is hoped that as we shift our focus to the next report we will be able to return to this publishing cycle.

1.1 Methodology

The methods of data collection utilized for the annual study included:

- a survey sent to each of the Ministries of Education,
- follow-up interviews to clarify or expand on any of the responses contained in the survey,
- an analysis of documents from the Ministry of Education, often available in online format, and
- follow-up interviews with key stakeholders in many of the jurisdictions.

Historically, the survey is sent to the Ministries in late Summer or early Fall. Officials at the Ministry responsible for e-Learning programs prepare their response to the survey and suggest updates from their previous year's profile. In most cases, these documents must receive approval from Directors and/or Assistant Deputy Ministers, and in some cases even approval from the Deputy Minister and/or the Minister or their political staff. Once all of the appropriate approvals have been received, the Ministries generally respond around mid- to late Fall.

However, over the past two years this timeline has been both delayed and extended due to the increased workload placed on Ministry officials of having to work remotely, decreased staffing, additional demands of supporting remote learning, among other strains. Additionally, there have been delays in the data collection due to an increased turnover in personnel responsible for e-Learning within the Ministry. In some cases this has been simply due to the natural promotion and/or retirement cycle (the latter being accelerated in some cases by the pandemic). Finally, in some jurisdictions there has been an increased policy focus on the provision, funding, and/or regulation of K-12 e-Learning. This increased focus often translates into additional approvals that are needed in order to be able to release the requested information, which can further delay a response.

² For additional information visit <https://canelearn.net/home/research/> or <https://sites.google.com/view/canelearn-ert/research-background>

As the annual *State of the Nation: K–12 e-Learning in Canada* report is not designed to be simply a reporting of Ministry responses, each year the researchers also analyze both government documents and items published from external organizations, including the news media. Additionally, the researchers also rely on their extensive network of practitioner contacts across the country to verify and obtain their perspective on how stated policies actually operate on the ground.

Finally, in addition to the data collection for the provincial, territorial, and federal profiles, the researchers also undertake an individual program survey that is sent to contacts from all of the K–12 distance, online, and blended programs across Canada identified by the researchers. During the 2020-21 data collection cycle, the survey was sent to all contacts on three occasions from September through December 2021. Like the survey sent to the Ministries, over the past two years the timeline for this data collection and the response rate have been impacted by the pandemic. The response rate by jurisdiction for 2020-21 is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Individual program survey responses for 2020-21

	Total Number of Programs	Number of Programs Responding	Response Rate
NL	2	2	100%
NS	2	0	0%
PE	1	0	0%
NB	2	1	50%
QC	5+	2	40%
ON	~70	6	9%
MB	~38	1	3%
SK	27	1	4%
AB	36	10	28%
BC	68	13	19%
YT	2	0	0%
NT	1	0	0%
NU	0	-	-
Federal	4	2	50%
Total	258	38	15%

Data as of the time the printed report was submitted for publication (K–12 e-Learning programs can update their information at any time).

The most recent responses that the *State of the Nation: K–12 e-Learning in Canada* researchers have received are included in the provincial, territorial and federal profiles located at <https://k12sotn.ca/data/>

A complete description of the methodology, including all of the instruments, is provided at <https://k12sotn.ca/about/>

1.2 How to Read This Document

The goal of the 2021 annual *State of the Nation: K–12 e-Learning in Canada* report is to provide an overview of the state of K–12 e-Learning in Canada. K–12 e-Learning is broadly defined to include all forms of K–12 distance and online learning, as well as blended learning that may occur within the context of a face-to-face setting.

The report begins with a national overview of K–12 distance, online, and blended learning in Canada. It continues with a brief update of any changes or new developments in each provincial, territorial, and federal jurisdiction. The full jurisdictional profiles continue to be available at <http://k12sotn.ca/data/>

It is our goal that the *State of the Nation: K–12 e-Learning in Canada* annual published report will be a much shorter version of the updated changes that have occurred in each jurisdiction from the previous year. However, the online version of the *State of the Nation: K–12 e-Learning in Canada* will continue to be a more comprehensive resource for e-Learning in each jurisdiction.

2. National Overview

Since 2011, the annual *State of the Nation: K–12 e-Learning in Canada* study has received consistent participation from the various Ministries of Education (and federal authorities since 2013). In some cases the Ministries collected and published detailed information. However, there are other instances where the Ministries do not collect any data related to K–12 distance, online, and/or blended learning. The data collected from Ministry sources are compared with the information received from other key parties in various jurisdictions, as well as an analysis of available documents. In some instances the data from Ministries and parties sourced agree, while in other cases there is some inconsistency between the stated governance regime and experiences of others. The sponsorship of the Canadian eLearning Network (CANeLearn) that began in 2014 has significantly increased the network of stakeholders available to the *State of the Nation: K–12 e-Learning in Canada* team. This sponsorship has also helped to foster the collection of data from the individual program survey. The response rate for the 2020–21 school year was only 15%, which was one of the lowest that we have seen in recent years. However, over the past eleven years (i.e., since the individual program survey was first introduced for the 2010–11 school year), the project has received at least one response from over 40% of the programs in Canada (see Table 2). This figure has decreased this year due to the influx of new K–12 distance, online, and blended learning programs — likely due to the pandemic.

Table 2. Historic individual program survey responses

	Total Number of Programs	Number of Programs Responding	Response Rate
NL	2	2	100%
NS	2	2	100%
PE	1	0	-
NB	2	2	100%
QC	5+	5	100%
ON	~70	38	54%
MB	~38	9	24%
SK	27	14	52%
AB	36	22	61%
BC	69	50	72%
YT	2	2	100%
NT	1	1	100%
NU	0	-	-
Federal	5	5	100%
Total	360	152	42%

Conversely it is also important to note that this reality means that the *State of the Nation: K–12 e-Learning in Canada* project team have never received any data from over half of the known K–12 e-Learning programs in Canada. While most jurisdictions are above the national average response rate, K–12 e-Learning programs in Manitoba remain well below the national average in terms of participating in the annual study. While the *State of the Nation: K–12 e-Learning in Canada* project team is confident in the information included in this report and on the project website, these limitations in the data collection must be recognized.

2.1 Nature of K–12 E-Learning Regulation

While many provinces and territories continue to have some reference to distance education in the *Education Act* or *Schools Act*, in most instances these references simply define distance education or give the Minister of Education in that province or territory the ability to create, approve or regulate K–12 distance education. Many of these references have also become antiquated given the present realities of K–12 distance and online learning. The only provinces where this is not the case are Nova Scotia (e.g., collective agreement signed between the Government of Nova Scotia [2020] and the Nova Scotia Teachers Union) and British Columbia (e.g., section 3.1 and section 75 (4.1) of the *School Act, 2006*, as well as section 8.1 of the *Independent School Act, 2006*). Table 3 provides a summary of regulations showing that the most dominant trend affecting the regulation of K–12 distance and online learning is that approximately a third of all jurisdictions use policy handbooks to regulate K–12 distance and online learning, sometimes in combination with a formal agreement or contract.

Table 3. Summary of the K–12 distance and online learning regulation by jurisdiction

	Legislation	Policy Handbook	Agreements	Memorandum of Understanding
NL				
NS	✓			
PE	✓			
NB		✓		
QC	✓		✓	
ON		✓	✓	
MB	✓	✓		✓
SK				
AB	✓	✓		
BC	✓		✓	
YT	✓			✓
NT	✓	✓		✓
NU	✓			✓
Federal	✓			

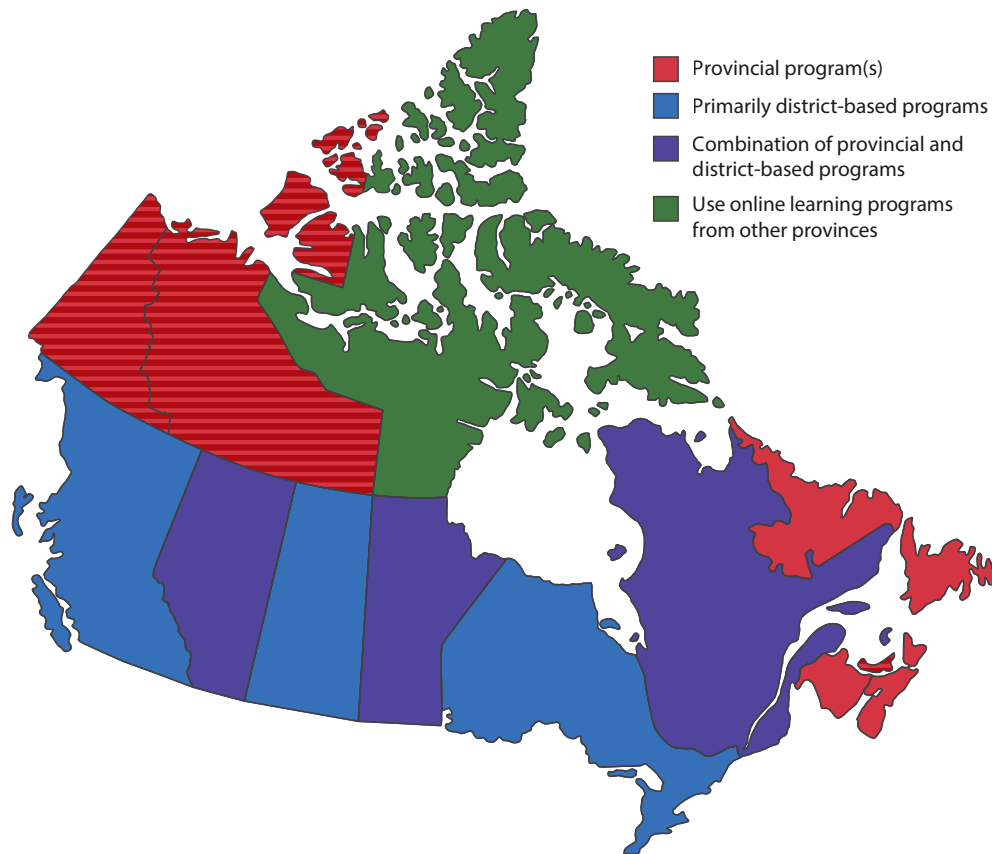
During the 2020-21 school year, British Columbia was the only jurisdiction to experience changes in their regulatory framework. Legislative changes to both the *School Act* and the *Independent School Act* have updated the terminology from distributed learning to online learning. Further, there were historically seven distributed learning policies (i.e., 6 public and 1 independent) that regulated distributed learning in the province, and all distributed learning schools had agreements with the Minister in order to operate. The legislative changes have also meant that school districts and independent school authorities will no longer need to enter into an Agreement with the Minister to offer online learning courses and programs to in-district students (but will still need an agreement to enrol out-of-district students or for cross-enrolment). The implementation of many of the other changes have been delayed until or have been planned for the 2021-22 school year or the 2022-23 school year. As such, there will be updates to detail in future reports.

Additionally, following announcements during the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years, the requirement that Ontario students had to take two online courses to graduate from secondary school came into effect during the 2020-21 school year. Late in 2021, the Ministry of Education announced that all secondary students in the province would receive credit for having taken one online course due to the remote and hybrid learning that occurred during the 2020-21 school year.

2.2 Level of K–12 Distance/Online Learning Activity

Fourteen years following the publication of the first *State of the Nation: K–12 e-Learning in Canada* report, there continues to be a great deal of consistency in types of K–12 distance and online learning programs that exist throughout the country (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Types of K–12 distance and online learning programming across Canada



Students from all thirteen provinces and territories continue to participate in K–12 distance and online learning opportunities. Most jurisdictions continue to have either primarily district-based programs or district-based programs and provincial programs. The exception to this trend is in Atlantic Canada and Northern Canada. In Atlantic Canada the dominant model is the use of a single province-wide program, with even Prince Edward Island piloting a province-wide program during the latter part of the 2020-21 school year. Both the Yukon and the Northwest Territories continue to develop their own online learning programs, however, all three territories in Northern Canada still utilize distance and/or online learning programs from southern provinces (notably Alberta and British Columbia).

In terms of the level of distance and online learning activity across Canada, the total K–12 population in Canada for 2020-21 was approximately 5.3 million students. Based on actual and estimated enrolment data, the number of students engaged in K–12 distance and online learning was 387,385 or 7.3% of the overall K–12 student population (see Table 4).

Table 4. Summary of K–12 distance and/or online learning activity by jurisdiction for 2019-20

	# of K–12 students	# enrolled in distance/ online learning	Percent involvement
NL	63,510	1,029	1.6%
NS	125,124	3,319	2.7%
PE	20,131	~175	0.8%
NB	98,906	4,754	4.8%
QC	1,003,322	~39,400	3.9%
ON	2,056,055	~122,000	5.9%
MB	186,372	~8,173	4.4%
SK	184,472	22,510	12.2%
AB	733,599	97,527	13.3%
BC	~673,000	~85,000	12.6%
YT	5,456	389	7.1%
NT	8,700	92	1.1%
NU	10,902	~15	0.1%
Federal	~108,995	~3,000	2.8%
Total	5,278,544	387,385	7.3%

Note: ~ symbol means that approximations were provided by one or more sources

In examining the data, jurisdictions can be grouped into three categories. First, the majority of provinces in Western Canada have K–12 distance and online learning participation levels that are much higher than the national average (i.e., Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia). Second, much of the central portion of Canada have consistently had participation levels somewhat near the national average (i.e., Manitoba, Ontario, and New Brunswick). Third, most jurisdictions in Atlantic Canada (i.e., Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador) and Northern Canada (i.e., Northwest Territories and Nunavut) have a relatively low proportion of K–12 students engaged in distance and online learning.

The only exceptions or outliers to these categories are Quebec and the Yukon. In the case of the Yukon, its participation levels are much higher than the other Northern Canadian territories — even higher than those jurisdictions in central Canada region in fact. However, this higher proportion of participation in K–12 distance and/or online learning is likely more reflective of the small overall K–12 student population. For example, an increase of three students in each school in the territory engaging in K–12 distance and/or online learning would represent an overall increase of about 100 students or an increase of approximately 2% in their participation level. Essentially, due to the low number of K–12 students overall, even small changes in the number of students engaged can have significant proportional changes.

On the other hand, the proportion of students engaged in K–12 distance and/or online learning in Quebec is proportionally much lower and more in line with the levels experienced in Atlantic Canada. A possible reason for the lack of participation levels in Quebec may be due to the data collection itself. As distance learning is primarily the responsibility of the school board, and not the Ministry of Education, the ability to collect data in the province has been limited. While there is reliable data from LEARN (which provides online and blended learning to the English-language Boards throughout the province), the only school board authority to ever respond to the individual program survey is the *Centre de services scolaire de la Beauce-Etchemin* (and that data is five years old). Additionally, as has been seen throughout the pandemic, the Ministry of Education in Quebec

has shown a specific preference for classroom-based learning (some might even describe it as a bias against providing distance learning unless absolutely necessary and only when in person learning is not an option at all). The lack of reliable data collection, the fact that distance learning is provided at the school board level, and the government's aversion to distance learning are all likely factors in the low proportion of K–12 students engaged in distance and online learning in Quebec.

As it has been stated before, it is difficult to determine why particular jurisdictions end up in each of the categories. There are jurisdictions that have significant levels of legislative and/or regulatory requirements — like British Columbia and Nova Scotia — that are in categories that are at the opposite end of the spectrum (e.g., British Columbia in the high proportion of K–12 distance and/or online learning, while Nova Scotia is in the low proportion category). Similarly, there are jurisdictions that have no legislative and/or regulatory requirements — like Alberta and Newfoundland and Labrador — that are also in opposite categories. There continue to be no real trends for why one jurisdiction has a higher or lower level of engagement in K–12 distance and online learning, and any effort to apply a rationale would be political, ideological, or self-serving.

The 2020-21 school year continues a trend in the growth of the proportion of students engaged in K–12 distance and/or online learning (see Table 5 below). The 2020-21 school year also represents the highest proportion of students engaged in K–12 distance and/or online learning, although based on the responses from both the Ministries of Education and the individual programs themselves, these enrolment figures were likely artificially inflated due to the pandemic and parents' concerns about the health of their students and families.

Table 5. K–12 distance and/or online learning student enrolment in Canada

Year	# of distance education students	% of students engaged in distance education
1999-2000 ¹	~25,000	0.5%
2008-09	~140,000	2.7%
2009-10	150,000-175,000	2.9%-3.4%
2010-11	207,096	4.2%
2011-12	245,252	4.9%
2012-13	284,963	5.2%
2013-14	290,185	5.4%
2014-15	311,648	6.0%
2015-16	293,401	5.7%
2016-17	277,603	5.4%
2017-18	263,686	5.1%
2018-19	299,320	5.9%
2019-20	310,582	6.0%
2020-21	387,385	7.3%

¹ Canadian Teachers Federation (2000)

One of the trends to note in Table 5 is the relative stability of the proportion of students engaged in K–12 distance and/or online learning (with the exception of this most recent year). The reader should be reminded that project researchers believe this stability represents the variability in the accuracy of data collection (e.g., many of the 14 jurisdictions are still only able to provide estimates, approximations, or delayed data based on previous school years). As such, the minor fluctuations from 2011-12 to 2019-20 probably have as much to do with the data collected as it does with actual increases or decreases in participation.

While there has been a pandemic-induced increase in the proportion of students engaged in K–12 distance and/or online learning during the 2020–21 school year, it is also important to examine jurisdictional trends within the 387,385 students or 7.3% proportion of students engaged in K–12 distance and/or online learning nationally (see Table 6).

Table 6. Summary of K–12 distance and/or online learning activity over the past four years

# students engaged in distance and/or online learning				
	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
NL	1,233	1,140	1,092	1,029
NS	~2,700	2,381	2,241	3,319
PE	56	~100	133	~175
NB	~3,239	~3,270	~3,470	4,754
QC	30,366	~40,000	~35,000	~39,400
ON	~82,000	~89,000	~98,000	~122,000
MB	~6,398	~11,875	~13,749	~8,173
SK	7,738	8,378	12,456	22,510
AB	~63,000	75,806	82,857	97,527
BC	65,556	~65,000	~59,000	~85,000
YT	136	170	234	389
NT	93	130	131	92
NU	~40	~70	19	~15
Federal	1,131	~2,000	~2,200	~3,000
Total	263,686	299,320	310,582	387,385

One of the interesting trends in Table 6 above (and in Table 7 below for that matter) is that the jurisdictions who were in that low participation category have had a relatively consistent number of students engaged in K–12 distance and online learning. Jurisdictions in the average participation category and the high participation category have seen increases (in many cases year over year increases).

Interestingly, while Ontario has the highest number of students engaged in K–12 distance and online learning, it is slightly below the national average in terms of the proportion of K–12 students participating in distance and online learning. This trend is expected to change over the next three to four years, as the first class of students are held to the graduation requirement of two online courses. Once the requirement is fully implemented it is expected that Ontario will have on average over 300,000 secondary students enrolled in at least one online course at any given time (Barbour & LaBonte, 2019). This figure would also not include elementary students, students enrolled in private virtual schools, or the non-traditional students enrolled in the Independent Learning Centre. Since the 2017-18 school year there has been an annual growth of 13.5%, 3.8%, and 24.7% respectively — for an average annual growth of 14%. If the participation in K–12 distance and online learning continued to grow at that rate by the 2023-24 school year (or when the Ontario graduation requirement is fully implemented) there would be approximately 395,000 K–12 students engaged in distance and online learning in the rest of Canada — compared to over 300,000 students engaged in distance and online learning in Ontario alone. Essentially, within the next three to four years there is a potential for Ontario to go from accounting for less than a third to almost one half of all students enrolled in K–12 distance and online learning.

Many of the trends in the participation by jurisdiction data are even more noticeable when the proportion of students engaged in K–12 distance and/or online learning is examined (see Table 7).

Table 7. Summary of K–12 distance and/or online learning activity over the past four years

% students engaged in distance and/or online learning				
	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
NL	1.9%	1.8%	1.7%	1.6%
NS	2.3%	2.0%	1.8%	2.7%
PE	0.3%	0.5%	0.7%	0.8%
NB	3.4%	3.3%	3.5%	4.8%
QC	3.0%	4.0%	3.5%	3.9%
ON	4.1%	4.4%	4.8%	5.9%
MB	3.1%	5.7%	6.6%	4.4%
SK	4.2%	4.5%	6.7%	12.2%
AB	8.8%	10.6%	11.2%	13.3%
BC	10.3%	10.2%	10.8%	12.6%
YT	2.4%	3.1%	4.2%	7.1%
NT	1.1%	1.4%	1.5%	1.1%
NU	0.4%	0.6%	0.2%	0.1%
Federal	1.1%	1.9%	2.0%	2.8%
Total	5.1%	5.9%	6.0%	7.3%

For example, the raw enrolment data indicates that the level of participation in British Columbia had rebounded from a plateau to a slight decrease, before seeing a significant increase in numbers for 2020-21. However, the proportional data suggests that while the plateau existed, there was no real decrease in the overall proportion of activity. Similarly, there was an increase during the 2020-21 school year — but proportionally it wasn't that significant with an increase of only 1.8%. Alberta posted an increase of 2.1%, the Yukon increased 2.9%, and Saskatchewan increased by 5.5%. Even though British Columbia had the third highest number of K–12 students engaged in distance and online learning, their pandemic-induced jump during the 2020-21 school years was more consistent with Nova Scotia and Ontario at 1.1% or New Brunswick at 1.3% (all jurisdictions from the average proportional or below average proportional categories).

In fact, over the course of these four school years in Table 7 there was an increase of 2.2% in the national average of students participating in K–12 distance and online learning. In British Columbia there was only a 2.3% increase, while in jurisdictions like Alberta there was an increase of 4.5% or Saskatchewan that had an increase of 8%. This trend might suggest that because British Columbia has historically been so far ahead of the rest of the country in the proportion of K–12 students engaged in distance and online learning there is less room for growth in this mode of educational delivery. Further, with an increase of 8% from the 2017-18 school year to the 2020-21 school year, Saskatchewan was leading the country in terms of the growth in the proportion of K–12 students engaged in distance and online learning.

2.3 Level of K–12 Blended Learning Activity

As we have discussed in previous reports, data on the level of blended learning has been collected in one form or another since the 2014-15 school year. However, the vast majority of jurisdictions do not formally track participation in blended learning programs and the data that is collected is quite unreliable. Previous editions of this report have indicated that jurisdictions such as New Brunswick and Ontario are able to provide data based on the number of student accounts in the provincially licensed learning management system, but that doesn't necessarily mean that those students are actually using those accounts or are using those accounts for the purposes of blended learning. That data also excludes those students and teachers that may be engaged in blended learning activities, courses, and programs that do not make use of the provincial learning management system. Additionally, blended learning activity has been estimated from data collected in the individual program surveys, but this instrument is only circulated directly to e-Learning programs (i.e., mainly programs that were primarily engaged in distance and/or online learning). So if Villanova Junior High in Conception Bay South, Newfoundland and Labrador or Forest Glade Public School in Windsor, Ontario or Okanagan Mission Secondary in Kelowna, British Columbia was engaged in blended learning there is a strong possibility that they would not have been aware of this survey to even consider completing it. As such, previous estimations of blended learning activity only just began to scratch the surface of the true level of blended learning occurring in most jurisdictions.

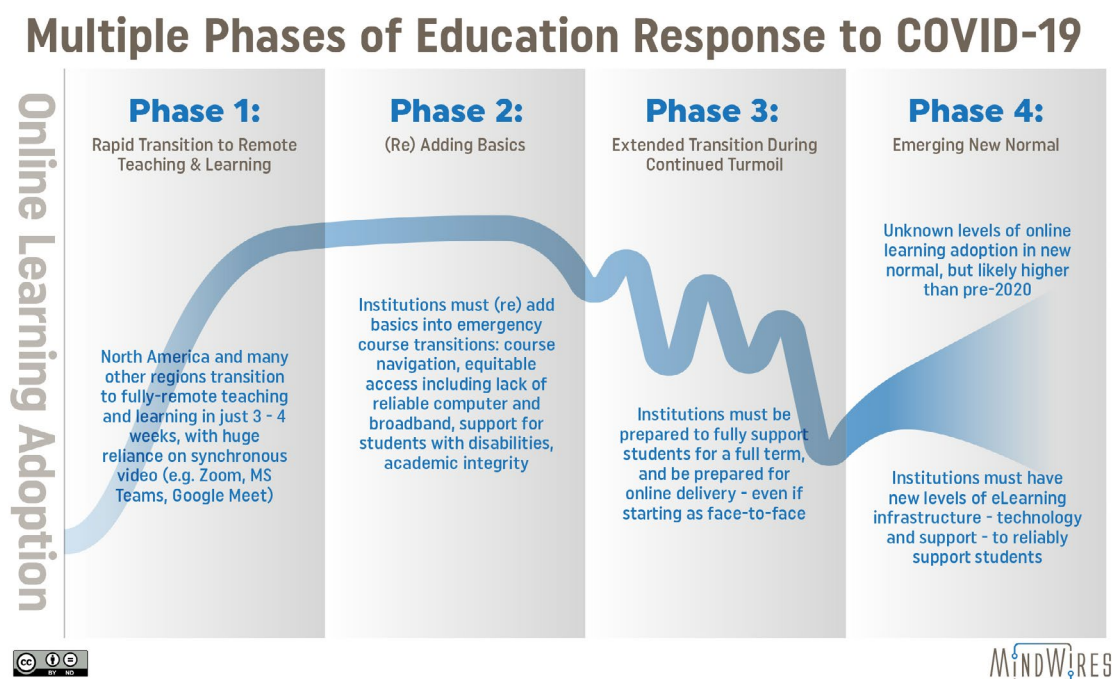
While there is no presentation of the overall K–12 e-Learning activity data for 2020-21 or comparison of that data to previous years, the data that has been collected is still presented in the full jurisdictional profiles (as the data can be situated appropriately in those profiles). It is also worth mentioning that the blended learning landscape in each individual jurisdiction has at times been useful in understanding that jurisdictions' response to the emergency remote teaching, and later remote learning, that occurred since March 2020.

2.4 K–12 Remote Teaching

As indicated above, the 2020-21 school year continued to be disrupted by COVID-19. While there are significant differences between traditional e-Learning and the temporary remote learning that has occurred over the past two years (Barbour et al., 2020), no reporting of K–12 distance, online, and/or blended learning in Canada would be complete without some discussion of how jurisdictions have provided those remote learning opportunities.³ If the pandemic response is considered in phases (see Figure 2), it is important to begin by situating the 2020-21 school year.

³ For a complete discussion of the pandemic response from provinces and territories, please visit CANeLearn's Pandemic Pedagogy Research Site at <https://sites.google.com/view/canelearn-ert/>

Figure 2. Four phases of educational response to COVID-19 in terms of remote and online learning adoption.
(Barbour et al., 2020, p. 3)



The four phases were described by the authors as:

Phase 1: Rapid Transition to Remote Teaching and Learning — Institutions making an all-hands-on-deck movement to remote delivery, often relying on synchronous video, with massive changes in just four weeks.

Phase 2: (Re)adding the Basics — Institutions must (re)add basics into emergency course transitions: course navigation, equitable access including reliable computer and broadband, support for students with disabilities, and academic integrity.

Phase 3: Extended Transition During Continued Turmoil — Institutions must be prepared to support students for a full term, and be prepared for online delivery — even if starting as face-to-face.

Phase 4: Emerging New Normal — This phase would see unknown levels of online learning adoption, likely higher than pre-COVID-19 days, but Institutions would have new levels of technology and support to reliably support students.

In March and April 2020, schools in all jurisdictions were forced into Phase 1 in an effort to simply provide some measure of continuity of learning for K–12 students all across the country. At some point during the Spring of 2020, most, if not all, jurisdictions were able to transition to Phase 2, where we saw teachers and students using the tools ‘(re) added’ in an effort to replicate the classroom experience (see Nagle et al., 2020a for a complete description of the emergency remote learning response that occurred at the end of the 2019-20 school year).

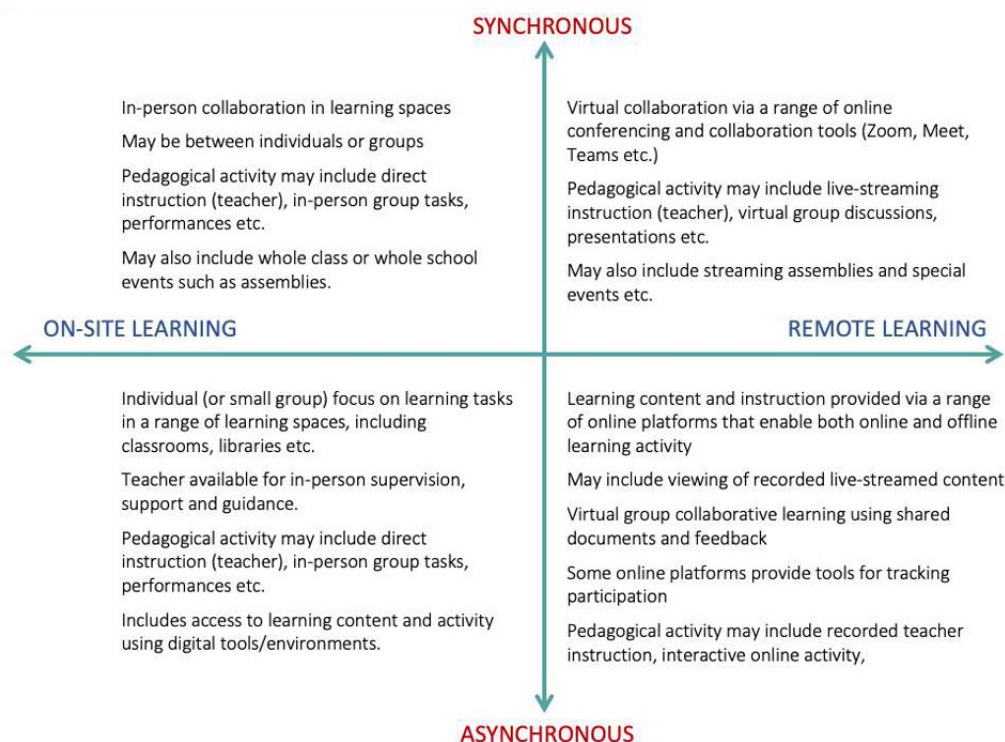
The Summer of 2020 should have allowed jurisdictions time to prepare their schools to enter Phase 3, a period of transition. Phase 3, often referred to as a toggle term, is when schools are able to provide in person learning, remote learning, or some combination of the two — depending on the local epidemiology of the virus — at levels where they can provide an equivalent student experience regardless of modality. Essentially, a situation where students are able to learn just as effectively in the classroom as they can at home through remote instruction, or just as effectively with some students in the classroom and some students at home. Phase 3 is also where teachers are adequately trained in how to use the tools and teach with them so that the medium in which they are teaching is irrelevant to the quality of the learning experience they design, deliver, and support. One of the ways some jurisdictions could have made the transition to Phase 3 more seamlessly would have been to leverage the existing e-Learning resources from traditional distance, online, and blended learning programs. For example, most jurisdictions had either province-wide online learning programs or a high proportion of school districts that operated online learning programs, yet only a few jurisdictions took advantage of these resources.

One of the challenges to providing remote learning opportunities has been the teacher's inability or lack of adequate time to create high quality asynchronous online content in advance. Instead, teachers relied on strategies designed for synchronous classroom instruction with little experience or exposure to how to design quality online instruction. Many university-based teacher preparation programs offer no programming focused on the provision of learning at a distance (Archibald et al., 2020), and, those that do, often include it under the guise of a more generalized technology integration experience. The point is, provinces and/or school districts did have the delivery tools and content to free classroom-based teachers from the responsibility of creating their own asynchronous remote learning experiences. If it had been provided, teachers could have focused on facilitating asynchronous learning with their students, something that is beyond the instructional methods many teachers use in the classroom. Asynchronous teaching methods can support teachers in building relationships with students, particularly remotely.

Another example of a challenge that was faced by many jurisdictions was the lack of technology and bandwidth in the home. Many jurisdictions still have, or recently had, correspondence-based distance learning materials that could have been utilized — had teachers been appropriately trained over the summer or during a delayed fall opening — to help overcome this challenge. However, the reality was that few jurisdictions used the early end to the 2019-20 school year, the Summer 2020 break, or delayed Fall 2020 openings to start to really leverage their existing e-Learning resources from traditional distance, online, and blended learning programs to better prepare for remote learning during the 2020-21 school year (see Nagle et al., 2020b for a complete description of the planning for and implementation of the Fall 2020 start to the school year).

As Nagle et al. (2021a) concluded, “the reality was that some jurisdictions did not put in place the necessary planning or preparation to allow the 2020-21 school year to proceed in the expected ‘toggle term’ fashion — as envisioned by Phase 3” (p. 3). In fact, for many jurisdictions the entire 2020-21 school year was spent in varying states of Phase 2 (with some jurisdictions even reverting back to Phase 1 at times). As Phase 3 is basically a model where the medium of the instruction (i.e., in person or at a distance) has no impact on the quality of the learning experience or environment, so it does not matter if the student is in the classroom or remote. In examining a future direction for public education in New Zealand, Wenmoth (2021) provides a useful model to envision what this toggling might look like — both during and in the absence of a crisis (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. On-site, remote, synchronous, and asynchronous options for teachers and students to engage in their learning. (p. 15).



Inherent in this model is a system of education where teachers and students are able to toggle between in person and remote settings, where learning is delivered in a synchronous or asynchronous fashion, with a level of fidelity that the student is not disadvantaged by the quality of instruction in any quadrant. However, what we saw across Canada during the 2020-21 school year — and thus far during the 2021-22 school year according to LaBonte et al. (2021) — was not a seamless transition between mediums or a consistent level of quality.

In fact, many jurisdictions scrambled to reinvent what had already existed in successful, existing e-Learning infrastructure. For example, the Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation (CDLI) in Newfoundland and Labrador had developed over 45 high school courses that were available to all provincial educators to use instead of having to develop their own asynchronous learning materials. However, according to public records, those materials and the learning management system that house them were never acknowledged or promoted as a resource for teachers and students to take advantage of. Similarly, despite having access to a full digital curriculum in a provincially-licensed learning management system, Ontario launched a synchronous hybrid learning model led by classroom teachers with limited training. Teachers live-streamed classroom instruction to remote students watching the classroom feed on a screen at home — that is, if they had the technology, bandwidth, and persistence to pay attention to their teacher.

Some jurisdictions did rely on their existing online learning programs to support students and parents wishing to remain home. This resulted in an increase in enrolment in the programs, but did not necessarily negate the need for remote learning during school closures. For example, in British Columbia students were offered either in-person learning or access to one of the 69 public and independent online learning schools, and the term ‘remote learning’ was not used by government (Montreuil, et al., 2021). Interestingly, throughout the 2020-21

school year there were no province-wide school closures issued, although there were local school closures based on local epidemiology. In fact, the Deputy Minister of Education reported that British Columbia school attendance actually increased in both classroom-based and online programs during the 2020-21 school year.

There were even jurisdictions that developed models of instructional delivery that had not previously existed (or had only existed in the most isolated cases) in the K–12 school system. In examining the Ontario response in greater detail, the government’s guide to reopening schools required boards to offer remote learning for all students, whether schools were closed or if a parent chose to keep their students home (Davidson, 2021; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2021; Wilson, 2021). The need to effectively plan for and train teachers for this new and unique model of hybrid learning would seem to have been clear. The hybrid teaching model that was used required teachers to provide between 180 to 225 minutes of live, synchronous teaching for elementary and secondary students (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2020). Many boards in the province met this requirement by having classroom teachers be responsible in real time for engaging students in learning activities that were in the classroom (i.e., ‘roomies’), as well as remotely connected through the use of new technology from home (i.e., ‘zoomies’). This simultaneous teaching instruction for classroom and remote students, or hybrid learning as it was called in the province⁴, was offered with limited planning, support, or training for teachers — technological or pedagogical. The challenges inherent in the hybrid model were immediately criticized (see Fox, 2021; Stewart, 2021; Wong, 2021).

While Phase 3 envisioned a period where schools ‘toggle’ or switch from in person learning to remote learning as “states of lockdown and openness, depending on their sense of epidemiological data and practical feasibility” persist (Alexander, 2020, para. 32), what occurred in most jurisdictions when school closures were required was still remote learning — and not online learning — because it was still viewed as temporary in nature. However, as teachers and students become more adept at teaching and learning in either modality, the goal is that the transition becomes much more seamless.

Teaching and learning landscapes are not dichotomous. It’s not in-person learning or online learning. Teaching and learning today requires the flexibility to navigate multiple learning landscapes simultaneously (Novak & Tucker, 2021). Standard classroom practices have been didactic, teacher-led, and assume uniformity, teaching to the middle of a broad range of abilities. This stops short of the flexible time, pacing, and pathways required for today’s learner and fails to take full advantage of existing technologies, tools, and practices that can be used to support that flexibility (Arnett, 2021).

What happened during the 2020-21 school year in most remote teaching contexts was an attempt to project a classroom instructional model to students at a distance, with the ‘bums in seats’ delivery model that existed in too many physical classrooms. It was a pedagogy of conformity that was group-based, teacher-centric, and never envisioned individual learning from a variety of different locations. It lacked the flexibility to adapt to changing social circumstances and environments. Irvine (2021) argued, “there’s no return to pre-pandemic teaching. We must accept the reality that the need for flexibility is endemic in the K–12 education system” (para 1). However, sadly in far too many jurisdictions, the pandemic did not lead to creation of flexible learning opportunities that took advantage of multiple modalities and technologies as one would have hoped.

⁴ Also referred to in the popular media and academic literature as co-seating, co-located teaching, and/or concurrent teaching (Barbour et al., 2020a; 2020b).

At some point the crisis will have passed and the pandemic will be over. At that stage, schools should emerge into Phase 4 or a 'new normal.' What will the impact of years of remote learning have on how online learning will look within the K–12 system? Will online learning resemble what it looked like in the Fall of 2019 (i.e., with standalone distance learning programs and schools)? Or will the experience of remote learning lead to a greater flexibility in the system as Irvine argues? Given that traditional online learning in Canada was rarely the live, synchronous, teacher-led instruction that we have seen during the pandemic, what impact will that model of remote and hybrid learning have on the K–12 system? These questions highlight the need to pursue this line of inquiry through continuing research.

3. Jurisdictional Summaries

The following sub-sections contain a summary of the revisions to the profiles for each province, territory, and federal jurisdiction. These summaries focus specifically on highlighting any changes to the governance and regulation that exists in that jurisdiction, as well as providing updated levels of activity for distance, online, and blended learning.

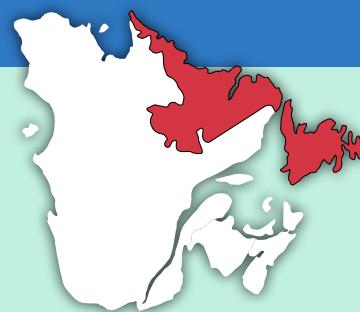
The project website contains a full jurisdictional profile that is organized in the following manner:

- a detailed description of the distance, online and blended learning programs operating in that jurisdiction;
- a discussion of the various legislative and regulatory documents that govern how these distance, online and blended learning programs operate;
- links to previous annual profiles;
- an exploration of the history of e-Learning in that jurisdiction;
- links to vignettes (i.e., stories designed to provide a more personalized perspective of those involved in K–12 e-Learning) for that jurisdiction;
- links to any brief issues papers (i.e., more detailed discussions of specific issues related to the design, delivery and support of K–12 e-Learning) in that jurisdiction;
- the most recent responses to the individual program survey;
- an overview of the jurisdiction's policies related to the provision of e-Learning in and to other jurisdictions; and
- **NEW:** a summary of the jurisdiction's remote learning response since March 2020 (i.e., summarized from Nagel et al., 2020a; 2020b; 2021).

The full profiles for each of these jurisdictions can be found at <https://k12sotn.ca/data/>

3.1 Newfoundland and Labrador (NL)

521,758	Population
259	Number of K–12 Schools
63,510	Number of K–12 Students
2	Number of K–12 E-Learning Programs
1,029	Number of K–12 E-Learning Students



e-Learning Updates

There have been no significant regulatory changes in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. At present, the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District operates two K–12 distance learning programs: the Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation (CDLI), which offers senior high programming, and ConnectED, which offers K-9 programming. During the 2020-21 school year there are 1,092 students registered in 45 different courses, as well as a variety of subject courses in the K-9 grade levels. The CDLI also allows any provincial educator (i.e., including classroom teachers) to register in their portal and use the CDLI's asynchronous course materials with their face-to-face students, but no data on the level of usage was provided.

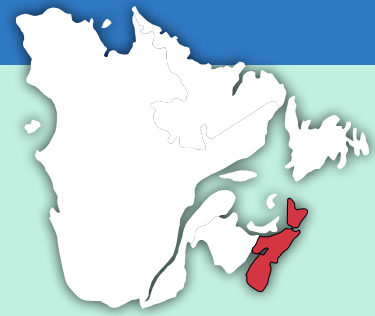
Remote Learning Summary

Schools in Newfoundland and Labrador closed on March 17, 2020. Initially, the Ministry of Education and Early Childhood Development provided a resource for students and parents during the remote teaching that began on April 2, 2020. While students and teachers used a variety of Google tools and teacher-created content, the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District (NLESD) provided some digital technology and internet access, as well as non-digital learning packages. While much of the 2020-21 school year proceeded with in-person learning under near-normal conditions, there were numerous public health measures implemented to ensure student safety. These measures were successful until February 18, 2021, when an increase in COVID-19 cases prompted provincial schools to return to remote learning, including a mandatory minimum three-hour day for kindergarten to grade 3, 90-minutes per day for grades 4-6, and full-day for grades 7–12 using a combination of Google tools. Around mid-April, most high schools in at-risk regions implemented a learning model that had students spending a portion of their time learning in person at school and the remainder of their time learning at home through a streamed feed of the live classroom instruction.

The full provincial profile can be found at <https://k12sotn.ca/nl/>

3.2 Nova Scotia (NS)

998 832	Population
370	Number of K–12 Schools
125,124	Number of K–12 Students
2	Number of K–12 E-Learning Programs
~122,756	Number of K–12 E-Learning Students



e-Learning Updates

There have been no significant regulatory changes in the province of Nova Scotia. Based on figures provided by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, there were approximately 1,919 students enrolled in offerings from the Nova Scotia Virtual School and approximately 1,400 students enrolled in courses offered through the correspondence studies program during the 2020-21 school year. Additionally, there were approximately 123,000 students with accounts in various blended learning tools offered by the Department.

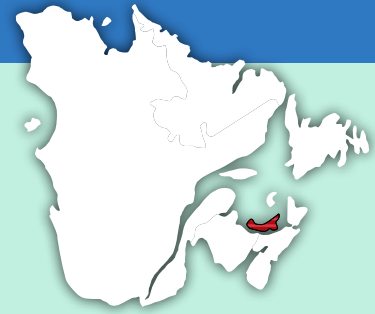
Remote Learning Summary

Schools in Nova Scotia closed on March 15, 2020. The Ministry of Education and Early Childhood Development initially provided literacy, numeracy, and mental health resources for students, parents, and guardians. *Google Classroom* and *Learn360* platforms were used to connect with students, share content, and assess learning, and Chromebooks were distributed to students and learning packages were distributed province-wide. For most of the 2020-21 school year schools were open with added health measures taken to ensure student safety. On April 28, 2021, schools closed due to rising COVID-19 cases and 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 on June 3. The remote learning instructional model was a mix of asynchronous and synchronous with minimum hours per day for each depending on grade level. Teachers had access to an eLearning site developed by the Nova Scotia Government and assistive technologies were provided to students 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.

The full provincial profile can be found at <https://k12sotn.ca/ns/>

3.3 Prince Edward Island (PE)

159,249	Population
63	Number of K–12 Schools
20,131	Number of K–12 Students
1	Number of K–12 E-Learning Programs
~175	Number of K–12 E-Learning Students



e-Learning Updates

There have been no regulatory changes in the province of Prince Edward Island. Beginning February 2021, the Ministry of Education and Life Long Learning piloted a virtual school. However, students also continued to enrol in programs offered from New Brunswick. Based on figures provided by the New Brunswick Department of Education, Early Learning and Culture, during the 2020-21 school year there were approximately 150 students enrolled in English-language distance education and 21 students enrolled in French-language distance education programs. Other e-Learning participation levels are still not formally tracked by the province.

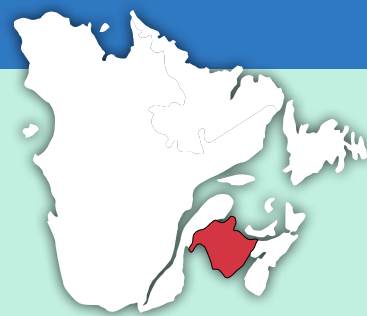
Remote Learning Summary

Schools on Prince Edward Island closed on March 23, 2020. The Ministry of Education and Life Long Learning created a web page from their Ministry website that contained home learning resources to support remote teaching with an initial focus on literacy, numeracy, and mental health and well-being. Later, the province adopted Google Classroom as its provincial learning management system and devices were delivered to students in need. Most of the 2020-21 school year offered in-school learning with added health measures including mandatory masking for grades 7–12 and voluntary for grades K–6, with schools closing briefly in May for one week based on case numbers. Expectations for synchronous and asynchronous learning included 60 to 80 minutes daily for kindergarten, two and one-half hours per day for grades 1–6, and in grades 7–12 class time remained the same as during a regular school day. Assessment and reporting continued as per a regular school year, but provincial assessments were cancelled for the 2020-21 school year.

The full provincial profile can be found at <https://k12sotn.ca/pe/>

3.4 New Brunswick (NB)

781,024	Population
307	Number of K–12 Schools
98,906	Number of K–12 Students
2	Number of K–12 E-Learning Programs
~14,000	Number of K–12 E-Learning Students



e-Learning Updates

There have been no regulatory changes in the management of distance learning in province of New Brunswick. Based on figures provided by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, during the 2020-21 school year there were approximately 3,150 regular students enrolled in the Anglophone program, while there 1,604 students enrolled in the Francophone program. Additionally, the Anglophone program offered a free online summer program that allowed interested high school students and recent graduates the opportunity to take one of 23 courses offered by 19 teachers. There were also approximately 9,000 English and French face-to-face students registered in the learning management system using approximately 1885 or more online courses in a more blended learning model under the direction of their local school's classroom teachers.

Remote Learning Summary

Schools in New Brunswick closed on March 13, 2020. The Department of Education launched their *Learning at Home* website for remote teaching support offering literacy, numeracy, and mental and physical health resources. The technologies and digital tools to support remote learning were not specified, but devices such as 1,000 iPads, 500 laptops, and 300 mobile internet hubs were loaned to students. During the 2020-21 school year, schools were mostly open and masks were recommended in the classroom, but not required, however secondary students were required to mask when outside the classroom. In the event of an outbreak, schools shifted to remote learning based on areas of risk within specific communities and regions. During “orange and yellow zone” alerts, only students at-risk were shifted to remote learning, but during “red zone” alerts, high school students moved to a blended learning model - a mix of asynchronous learning materials coupled with synchronous live teaching in schools. Absences throughout the K–12 system were high during red zone alerts, as remote learning was no longer mandated under this level of alert. Teachers were responsible for continued child learning if they needed to remain at home, and were asked to maintain a balance between synchronous and asynchronous learning to minimize screen time. Students were responsible for their own devices, but if in need, families could apply to the ‘Laptop Assistance Program’ to obtain any needed devices for their child’s learning.

The full provincial profile can be found at <https://k12sotn.ca/nb/>

3.5 Quebec (QC)

8,572,054	Population
3,102	Number of K–12 Schools
1,003,322	Number of K–12 Students
5+	Number of K–12 E-Learning Programs
~67,000+	Number of K–12 E-Learning Students



e-Learning Updates

There have been no regulatory changes in the province of Quebec. However, there were two pilot projects under the 2017 amendment to the *Loi sur l'instruction publique* (i.e., Bill 144) provisions currently underway. The first pilot project focused on the training of teachers for online teaching, which originally started in 2018 and continued in the 2020-21 school year. This second pilot project focused on optional modes of online delivery, in particular a hybrid model that involved broadcasting a teacher in the classroom with a group of students on site, while streaming to students who watch online at distance location. These pilot projects involved approximately 4,400 students.

Additionally, during the 2020-21 school year it was estimated there were approximately 35,000 K–12 and adult students enrolled in secondary distance and/or online learning courses from a variety of providers. It is also estimated that there were at least approximately 32,000 students enrolled in formal blended learning opportunities.

Remote Learning Summary

Schools in Quebec first closed on March 16, 2020. The Ministry of Education launched *Open School/L'École Ouverte* as a resource for students, parents, and guardians with a curricular focus on literacy, numeracy, the arts, and physical and mental health. The Ministry's focus remained on in-school learning and on May 11 there was a non-compulsory return to school (with the exception of the Montreal area, which remained closed). Much of the 2020-21 school year proceeded with in-person learning, and the province did not issue a province-wide shutdown of schools. Instead, school closures were on a region by region basis and only children who were at-risk medically were allowed to continue with full-time distance education. The only alternative for parents who wished their children not to attend in-school learning was to remove them from their school and homeschool. However, on Dec. 17, 2020, provincial schools did close and resumed 'virtual teaching' where Boards were required to offer devices to students to access the internet and have each school prepare emergency protocols for educational services and manage them 'locally.' Regular classes resumed after the winter holiday for elementary students, but secondary students continued virtual learning for one more week and opened on Jan. 11, 2021.

The full provincial profile can be found at <https://k12sotn.ca/qc/>

3.6 Ontario (ON)

14,723,497	Population
4,850	Number of K–12 Schools
2,020,245	Number of K–12 Students
~70	Number of K–12 E-Learning Programs
~1,402,850	Number of K–12 E-Learning Students



e-Learning Updates

The demands of the pandemic and the necessity for all school boards in Ontario to utilize remote learning at different periods throughout the 2020-21 school year posed a challenge. The November 21, 2019 announcement established that Ontario students would be required to take two online credits to graduate from secondary school beginning with students graduating in the 2023-24 school year (Ministry of Education, 2019a), and that courses began counting toward this requirement beginning in September 2020. The previous announcement was for four mandatory courses (Ministry of Education, 2019b), which after responses from educators, teacher unions, and other affected organizations in the province was reduced to two courses. A similar government announcement was reported in March 2021 regarding legislation that would make synchronous remote learning a permanent option for students (Alphonso, 2021), and school boards would be required to use remote learning during disruptions and school closures (such as snow days). However following an initial response from a variety of groups opposing the idea, public discussion of this option ceased.

Based on data provided by the Ministry of Education, approximately 87,000 students earned 100,000 credits online through public district school boards during the 2019-20 school year (i.e., the most recent year for which data is available). In addition, approximately 18,000 credits were earned by students enrolled in online courses offered by inspected private schools. During the 2020-21 school year, there were more than 22,000 students enrolled in distance courses offered by the Independent Learning Centre. Additionally, there were 1,402,850 unique student logins in the provincial learning management system from classroom-based or online students.

Remote Learning Summary

Schools in Ontario closed on March 23, 2020. The Ministry of Education already provided a Virtual Learning Environment with digital courses and resources that also provided free webinars, resources, and training for teachers and resources for parents and the Ministry provided devices to school boards to distribute. Most school boards chose to delay the start of in-class learning by one week with staggered start dates by grade level. Remote learning was delayed two weeks to at the start of the 2020-21 school year. Elementary students had the option to attend class full-time or continue with remote learning while secondary students used cohort groupings to limit class size with students alternating between in-school and remote learning. Enhanced health measures were put in place, but on January 4, 2021, emergency remote learning began again due to a provincial lockdown. Various regions across Ontario reopened at different times based on COVID-19 cases, but the March Break was postponed for all public schools until the week of April 12, 2021, with all provincial schools returning to remote learning on April 19 as schools remained closed for the rest of the school year.

The full provincial profile can be found at <https://k12sotn.ca/on/>

3.7 Manitoba (MB)

1,380,000	Population
914	Number of K–12 Schools
186,372	Number of K–12 Students
~38	Number of K–12 E-Learning Programs
~8,173	Number of K–12 E-Learning Students



e-Learning Updates

There have been no regulatory changes in the province of Manitoba. Each school division in the province continues to participate in one or more of the three distance education program options. During the 2020-21 school year, the Independent Study Option (ISO) (i.e., print-based), the Teacher Mediate Option (TMO), and the Web-based Course (WBC) Option continued to operate at a provincial level (although the ISO was discontinued at the end of the school year). There were also two virtual collegiates in operation (i.e., the Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre and InformNet). Collectively, these providers offered distance learning to ~8,173 students. Manitoba Education still does not formally track participation in blended learning.

Remote Learning Summary

Schools in Manitoba closed on March 20, 2020. Initially, the Ministry of Education launched their remote teaching website, *My Learning at Home*, which offered connections to curriculum activities for each grade with a focus on literacy and numeracy as well as mental and physical health. For students with limited access to online learning, printed materials were provided. The 2020-21 school year proceeded with in-person learning with cohort groupings and physical distancing measures, but on January 4, 2021, students in grades seven to 12 were required to return to remote learning. The province did not issue a province-wide shutdown of schools, instead, it was on a region by region basis. Depending on the level of risk due to COVID-19, there were three stages offered: level one in school, level two a blended model, and level three fully remote. Fully remote students were still expected to engage in full participation during the day with regular assessments. Parents who wanted their child to remain at home were required to decide by January 30, 2021, which then remained in effect for the rest of the 2020-21 school year. Students in grades one to four within the remote learning model were expected to engage in five to six hours of synchronous learning per week and two and a half hours of asynchronous work each week, grades five to eight in seven to eight hours of synchronous learning per week with three hours of asynchronous work per day. A further requirement was for teachers to meet individually with their students for at least 20 minutes per week and each school division and individual school was responsible for students having access to digital devices.

The full provincial profile can be found at <https://k12sotn.ca/mb/>

3.8 Saskatchewan (SK)

1,178,681	Population
780	Number of K–12 Schools
184,472	Number of K–12 Students
27	Number of K–12 E-Learning Programs
22,510	Number of K–12 E-Learning Students



e-Learning Updates

There have been no regulatory changes in the province of Saskatchewan. There were currently 19 school divisions, one independent school, and one First Nation educational authority categorized as having online learning schools offering Prekindergarten to Grade 12 learning courses to Saskatchewan students. During the 2021-21 school year, there were 22,510 unique students in Prekindergarten to Grade 12. Finally, the Ministry does not monitor blended learning activity.

Remote Learning Summary

Schools in Saskatchewan closed on March 20, 2020. Initially, the Ministry of Education did not mandate remote teaching, and any remote learning opportunities that teachers provided remained optional for students. The Ministry provided online resources that made curricular connections to health education, science, and social science as well as a resource page to support mental health and tips for remote teaching for parents and guardians. The 2020-21 school year began as normal, after a one-week delay, with enhanced health measures in place, yet masks were not mandatory only recommended in grades 4–12. By mid-November, 2020, Saskatoon and Regina high schools moved to alternative days of learning to reduce their capacity by 50%, while other schools closed on an as need basis. In March 2021, the province closed all public schools and students returned to remote learning which consisted of both asynchronous and synchronous activities. Grades K-8 used *Google Classroom* as their learning management system, grades 9–12 *Blackboard*, and assessment and reporting continued as usual.

The full provincial profile can be found at <https://k12sotn.ca/sk/>

3.9 Alberta (AB)

4,436,258	Population
2,518	Number of K–12 Schools
733,599	Number of K–12 Students
36	Number of K–12 E-Learning Programs
97,527	Number of K–12 E-Learning Students



e-Learning Updates

There have been no regulatory changes in the province of Alberta. At present, Alberta Education lists 36 different distance and/or online learning programs as a part of their website directory. This does not include the Alberta Distance Learning Centre, which closed at the end of the 2020-21 school year (officially September 1, 2021). During the 2020-21 school year there were a total of 97,527 students coded as being enrolled in online learning/distance education programs. Alberta Education currently does not track blended learning activity.

Remote Learning Summary

Schools in Alberta closed on March 16, 2020. The province launched its *LearnAlberta* website to support remote teaching for students and parents with a curricular focus on literacy and numeracy. Teachers were mandated to continue evaluating student learning while focusing on learning standards. There were no delays to the start of the Fall 2020-21 school year which began with in-school learning with the inclusion of added health measures. Parents had continued to have the option to keep their students in remote learning and distance learning. On November 30, 2020, junior and high schools (grades 7–12) moved to remote learning with elementary schools closing shortly after as well. All schools returned to in-school learning on January 11, 2021, only to shift back to remote learning sometime between April 21 and May 3, 2021. In-school learning resumed in late May but some schools and/or specific classes that were required to quarantine continued learning remotely for two weeks. Platforms used for remote learning included *Google Meet* and *Zoom*. Assessment, evaluation, and reporting continued as usual, but the provincial achievement tests were optional for school authorities.

The full provincial profile can be found at <https://k12sotn.ca/ab/>

3.10 British Columbia (BC)

5,200,000	Population
1,942	Number of K–12 Schools
~673,000	Number of K–12 Students
68	Number of K–12 E-Learning Programs
~85,000	Number of K–12 E-Learning Students



e-Learning Updates

There were only minor regulatory changes in the province of BC during the 2020-21 school year. However, at the end of the school year the Ministry of Education concluded a consultation process that had begun in 2018 with the passage of *Education Statutes Amendment Act, 2020* or Bill 8 on March 4, 2020. Bill 8 changed distributed learning in the *School Act* and the *Independent School Act* in three key ways:

- changed the term “distributed learning” to “online learning”;
- enabled School Districts and Independent School Authorities to offer online learning courses and programs to their local (or ‘in-district’) students without an agreement with the Minister; and
- required online learning schools to have an agreement with the Minister to enrol students from outside their district boundary (i.e., out-of-district enrolment) or to enrol students simultaneously enrolled with another board or independent school authority (i.e., cross enrolment). (Government of British Columbia, 2020)

The full enactment of Bill 8 was scheduled for July 1, 2021, and will begin with an interim year during the 2021-22 school year with seven interim online learning policies in place and all 68 online learning schools being held interim online learning agreements. As such, these more substantive legislative and regulatory changes will be discussed in greater detail in subsequent annual reports.

In 2020-21 there were 52 district-level public distributed learning schools and 16 independent distributed learning schools that enrolled approximately 85,000 unique students in one or more courses. Additionally, Open School BC also provided provincial content and online hosting services on a cost-recovery model to school districts lacking the capacity or desire to manage their own distributed learning program. Finally, the Ministry of Education does not gather formal data on blended learning programs.

Remote Learning Summary


Schools in British Columbia closed on March 17, 2020. The province published several websites to provide guidance and links to activities, resources, and health advice with a focus on literacy, numeracy, core competencies, and the *First Peoples Principles of Learning*. The distribution of physical equipment was left to school districts, however, the Ministry noted that more than 23,000 computers and devices had been loaned out to students. In-school learning began June 1, 2020, using a hybrid model of online and classroom learning with alternating cohorts of students to ensure physical distancing. All boards were required to implement strict health and safety protocols as defined and monitored by provincial health authorities and WorkSafeBC. In-school learning continued for the start of the 2020-21 school year which was delayed by two days. Students had the option to choose online or distributed learning and there remained remote learning options for

students across the province in many school districts. Students continued with cohorts or ‘learning groups’ of 20-30 students in each group with the maximum number per group was 60 in elementary and 120 for secondary. Full curriculum expectations, assessments, and reporting were in place during the school year and the provincial government allocated \$8.2 million to specifically support Indigenous learners to address learning loss, mental health, and technology for remote learning.

The full provincial profile can be found at <https://k12sotn.ca/bc/>

3.11 Yukon (YT)

35,874	Population
33	Number of K–12 Schools
5,456	Number of K–12 Students
2	Number of K–12 E-Learning Programs
~850	Number of K–12 E-Learning Students



e-Learning Updates

There have been no regulatory changes in the Yukon territory. During the 2020-21 school year, the territory’s only English-language online program — the Aurora Virtual School — enrolled a total of 325 students in its various programs, while the territory’s only French-language online program — *École Nomade* — enrolled 14 students. Additionally, there were another 15 students enrolled in programming offered by the *Centre francophone d’éducation à distance* and the *Conseil scolaire de la Colombie-Britannique*.

Remote Learning Summary

Schools in the Yukon closed on March 18, 2020. The Ministry of Education added a web page dedicated to continuing student learning at home that offered resources for each grade level as well as for mental health and well-being. Students with limited internet access were provided printed resources and specific considerations for First Nations students were provided by the Ministry in partnership with local communities but teachers were responsible for providing students with learning materials, resources, and supports to complete the learning standards. The 2020-21 school year proceeded with in-person learning but school closures occurred in larger cities and rural areas throughout the 2020-21 school year. Digital tools that could be utilized were: *Moodle*, *Microsoft 365* with *Teams*, *Google Classroom*, and *FreshGrade*. A focus on literacy and numeracy as part of the core competencies continued, as well as a learning recovery model prioritizing formative and benchmarking assessments for both language arts and math

The full provincial profile can be found at <https://k12sotn.ca/yk/>

3.12 Northwest Territories (NT)

44,826	Population
49	Number of K–12 Schools
8,700	Number of K–12 Students
1	Number of K–12 E-Learning Programs
92	Number of K–12 E-Learning Students



e-Learning Updates

There have been no regulatory changes in the Northwest Territories. During the 2020-21 school year 92 students were enrolled in Northern Distance Learning, representing 201 course enrolments. Additionally, there were approximately 124 grade 9-12 students enrolled in distance learning courses offered through the Alberta Distance Learning Centre. The Department of Education, Culture and Employment does not formally track blended learning.

Remote Learning Summary

Schools in the Northwest Territories closed on March 16, 2020. The government created a Continuity of Learning document to support teachers and a government web page 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. There was no delay to the start of the 2020-21 school year and in-school learning was provided with increased health measures including learning 'bubbles' and physical distancing. Masks were not mandatory for in-class but used when physical distancing could not be achieved. 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 attended 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.

The full provincial profile can be found at <https://k12sotn.ca/nt/>

3.13 Nunavut (NV)

39,407	Population
45	Number of K–12 Schools
10,902	Number of K–12 Students
0	Number of K–12 E-Learning Programs
Unknown	Number of K–12 E-Learning Students



e-Learning Updates

There were no changes in the regulatory framework for Nunavut. There are no K–12 distance/online learning programs in Nunavut. During the 2020-21 school year students from the territory continued to enrol in courses offered by the Alberta Distance Learning Centre. The Department of Education does not formally track blended learning.

Remote Learning Summary

Schools in Nunavut closed on March 17, 2020. The Department of Education created their remote teaching website called *Angirrami ilnniarniq (Learning from Home)* which offered resources for teachers to print and prepare packages to be sent out to students with limited internet access. The curricular focus was on literacy, numeracy, and health and well-being. Community and family-based learning activities, such as hunting and fishing, were also encouraged. As there were no cases of COVID-19 in the territory of Nunavut, schools fully re-opened as usual for grades K–12 with added health measures including enhanced cleaning, physical distancing, and limited group activities. Masks were not required, but on November 18th, 2020, Nunavut went into a two-week provincial lockdown. After schools in Iqaluit closed again in mid-March 2021 as a preventative measure to combat COVID, the government closed all schools across the province for a three-week period. The learning models throughout the school year varied from fully in-school, to partial in-school and remote home-based learning with student cohorts in staggered schedules of attending in-school, to fully remote. Remote learning supports during blended and fully remote learning included learning packages, 'supplemental learning tools' (not specified), 'enhanced land-based' learning, and daily check-ins with teachers and students.

The full provincial profile can be found at <https://k12sotn.ca/nv/>

3.14 Federal

1,008,955 ¹	Population
487 ²	Number of K–12 Schools
~108,995 ³	Number of K–12 Students
4	Number of K–12 E-Learning Programs
Unknown	Number of K–12 E-Learning Students



1 2016 Census data

2 refers to those reporting a 2019-20 nominal roll directly to ISC

e-Learning Updates

There were no changes in the regulatory framework for schools that fall under the federal jurisdiction of Indigenous Services Canada (ISC). Under the Education Transformation and to reflect the Principle of First Nation Control of First Nation Education, ISC respects that the sharing of data is a First Nation decision and, therefore, has not provided program level data for the 2020-21 school year.

At present, four Indigenous e-Learning programs have been identified. However, due to a lack of recently updated data for these programs, as well as the fact that these four programs only represented a portion of those reporting to ISC, no estimate of the approximate number of students engaged in e-Learning is provided.

Remote Learning Summary

First Nations schools do not fall under provincial jurisdiction. While many schools may have followed the mandates and guidelines in the respective provinces in which the school is located, Indigenous Services Canada supported First Nations Control of First Nations Education and, as such, the First Nation communities made their own choices regarding their protocols and delivery methods. Federal guidance for K–12 school re-opening was based on the most current scientific information as outlined in *Community-based Measures to Mitigate the Spread of Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) in Canada* (Government of Canada, 2021), and the federal government outlined considerations for reducing risk including the use of masks for children over ten years of age and particularly where physical distancing could not be achieved. Extra considerations for students with disabilities included continued access to supports and services with extra accommodations made where necessary. Supports were also outlined for Indigenous communities who were “remote” or “isolated” specifically regarding health measures for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities to mitigate risk.

The full federal profile can be found at <https://k12sotn.ca/fnmi/>

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5. Call for Sponsors

2022 *State of the Nation: K–12 e-Learning in Canada* Study

The 2022 version of the *State of the Nation Study: K–12 E-Learning in Canada* study will represent the fifteen annual report produced by this research initiative. During that time we have provided annual update of the K–12 policy and activity reports for each of the provinces, territories, and those programs under federal jurisdiction. We have also published numerous brief issue papers on topics of interest to the field within Canada, and vignettes from a variety of K–12 e-Learning programs across the different provinces and territories. We have collected annual data from individual programs in each jurisdiction through an annual survey. Finally, we have ensured that recent reports and website updates are available in both English and French.

As this time we are seeking funding for the 2022 K–12 e-Learning study of Canada. If your organization is interested in participating through sponsorship by supporting the fifteenth anniversary edition of the *State of the Nation Study: K–12 E-Learning in Canada* report, please contact Michael Barbour, principal investigator at mkbarbour@gmail.com.

Your participation as a sponsor helps support more widespread participation from online and blended programs across the country in the K–12 e-Learning in Canada project and is an ideal opportunity to demonstrate your organization's interest in, and commitment to, supporting online and blended learning. Your company or organization will be recognized for its support of virtual schools seeking to effectively expand educational options for K–12 students across Canada.

Please review the sponsor benefits and opportunities for the *State of the Nation: K–12 e-Learning in Canada* study:

- Recognition in all post-study press releases, presentations and distribution of information;
- Opportunity to provide input into the program survey;
- Participate in project conference calls;
- Project sponsor name and logo listed on all promotional materials;
- Project sponsor name and logo listed on the final report;
- Receive hard copies of the final report;
- Receive Executive Summary of the final report for use on company website and for marketing purposes; and
- Receive recognition as a leader for cutting-edge research of K–12 e-Learning in Canada for sponsoring the research study.

Additionally, for the fifteen annual report we are looking for sponsors who are interested in imagining a future for this annual study — a future that may share features of the existing study and report, but a future that could also look quite different. Looking ahead, given what we know and have learned over the years from the annual *State of the Nation: K–12 e-Learning in Canada* report, what would you like to have more information about, more examples to follow, more data to use to provide for the future of e-Learning within your organization?

For-profit and non-profit institutions, organizations, individuals, foundations and companies are welcome to partner with the *State of the Nation: K–12 e-Learning in Canada* research team for sponsoring the study. Please consider sponsorship of this important survey and report to be conducted annually. Your consideration is deeply appreciated.

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