



Prince Edward Island (PE)

Population: 159,249

Number of K-12 Schools: 63

Number of K-12 Students: 20,131

Number of K-12 Distance Learning Programs: 1

Number of K-12 Distance Learning Students: ~260

Governance and Regulation

While there is no reference to distance education in the *Education Act, 2016*, pursuant to section 8 of the School Act, 1988, there have been two Ministerial Directives concerning distance education (i.e., first *Ministerial Directive No. MD 2001-05*, which was superseded by *Ministerial Directive No. MD 2008-05*). According to MD 2008-05, distance education was defined as:

a mode of instruction in which the student and teacher are separated in either time or space or both, and where two-way communication takes place through non-traditional means for the most part. There is a broad range of both individualized and team instructional approaches and strategies used in distance education. Distance education communication may utilize various technologies and media, including but not limited to print, computers and computer networks, telecommunications, and audio-visual equipment and resources.

Internal regulations continue to be driven by this Ministerial Directives, which applies to courses delivered during the regular school day. The directive also outlines a series of beliefs about the nature of distance education instruction.

Additionally, individual schools and districts that participate in distance education programs must adhere to guidelines found in the provincial Distance Education Handbook document. The updated document specifies the use of distance education for students in particular circumstances.

K-12 Distance and Online Learning Activity

Historically, the province had maintained a small K –12 distance education programme using a video conferencing system primarily for the purpose of French-language courses, which ended at the conclusion of the 2010–11 school year. Beginning in February 2021, the Ministry piloted a new virtual school that again focused on French-language courses. The pilot program was modeled after the Conseil scolaire acadien provincial virtual school in Nova Scotia. After two semesters the Ministry handed it off to the La Commission scolaire de langue française to operate, although students from the Public School Branch were also able to enroll in its courses. During the 2021-22 school year, approximately 40 students were enrolled.

Through an inter-provincial agreement students in Prince Edward Island are funded to take online courses from the New Brunswick Department of Education and Early Childhood

Development. During the 2021-22 school year there were 220 students enrolled in online courses through this agreement.

K-12 Blended Learning Activity

According to the Department, there was no intentional blended learning (i.e., specific projects or initiatives) occurring in public schools.

Remote Learning

Fall 2021 Reopening

All schools began the 2021-22 school year in-school with ‘low-risk’ measures that included health and safety precautions (e.g., masks, physical distancing, and cohorts). Assemblies, extra-curricular activities, and sports also continued. If cases of COVID-19 rose and remote learning resumed, the platform used across the province, *Google Classroom*, would include a blend of synchronous and asynchronous learning time. If all children within a class or a school were forced to remain home, the expectations for remote learning would include: Kindergarten will have 60-80 minutes of instruction per day in increments of 15-20 minutes at a time; for grades 1-6 would have two and a half hours per day; for grades 7-12 would follow their regular class schedules. ‘Considerations and support’ are offered to students with limited access to the internet or learning devices. Assessments and reporting would continue (LaBonte et al., 2021).

2021-22 School Year

Schools remained open to in-person learning, with some local school closures despite the government moving to an ‘elevated risk’ status. Prior to the return to school from December holidays, due to increasing community spread of the Omicron variant of COVID-19, it was decided to close schools to in-person learning in January with students returning to remote learning. The reopening of schools was delayed until January 17, 2022 to allow time for schools and parents to prepare for new measures including cohorts of students, distribution of new HEPA air filters, removal of excess furniture to allow for greater physical distancing, and the requirement for students to take two rapid antigen tests 48 hours apart prior to returning to school. February saw the gradual release of community restrictions across Canada with some relaxation regarding sport and recreational activities in PE, but it was not until April 5, 2022 when the Prince Edward Island government lifted the limit on sports teams while rescinding the provincial State of Emergency. The mask mandate remained in effect until May 24 when the requirement for students to conduct regular antigen tests at home for school students prior to a return to school was relaxed (LaBonte et al., 2022).

References

LaBonte, R., Barbour, M. K., & Mongrain, J. (2022). *Teaching during times of turmoil: Ensuring Continuity of learning during school closures*. Canadian eLearning Network.
<https://canelearn.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Teaching-During-Times-of-Turmoil.pdf>

LaBonte, R., Barbour, M. K., & Nagle, J. (2021). *Pandemic pedagogy in Canada: Lessons from the first 18 months*. Canadian eLearning Network.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1gaNFXDCt44W9DaAC9iRAf33pDTKup2C8/view>