

15 YEARS  
CELEBRATING

# STATE OF THE NATION:

K-12 E-LEARNING IN CANADA  
2022 EDITION

Michael K. Barbour  
Touro University California

Randy LaBonte  
Canadian eLearning Network



CANADA AGILE PREPARATORY  
ACADEMY





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Michael K. Barbour  
Founding Researcher, State of the Nation Report

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## Executive Summary

The 15th 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 a summary of the remote learning that continued through the 2021-22 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 enrollment 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, while Atlantic Canada has the lowest level of participation. For the most part the school year still was impacted by the pandemic with school closures and remote learning – not online learning – as 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.

During the 2021-22 school year, several jurisdictions experienced changes in their online programs regulatory framework or practices. In Québec there were 56 distance learning pilot projects, spread over 39 educational establishments and organizations with at least 1500 students involved. Ontario saw significant changes as the massive increase in e-learning with implementation of the two mandatory online courses saw the Ontario eLearning Consortium grow to include all but five of the public and Catholic school boards, with a subsequent increase in consortium staffing. Following a comprehensive review of the K-12 education system by the Manitoba Commission on K to 12 Education that concluded in March 2020, the Ministry released an action plan report that included an online high school to enhance access to programming and learning across the province. In Alberta the *Funding Manual for School Authorities* was further revised to account for – and even encourage – enrollment of students from other school authorities. In British Columbia, full implementation of the July, 2021 legislative changes were extended to July 2023 with interim agreements between the Ministry and school districts governed the now designated online schools for the 2021-22 school year.

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.



## Introduction

This report details the results of the fifteenth 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/>

Two years ago, we began the 2020 *State of the Nation: K-12 e-Learning in Canada* report 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 learning.<sup>1</sup> But we would be remiss if it was excluded altogether.

While not as drastic as what occurred in Spring 2020, or even during the 2020-21 school year, the 2021-22 school year continued to be impacted by the on-going pandemic. In some instances this impact involved school closures and the need to revert to some form of hybrid and/or remote learning, although this was considerably less than in previous years. In other instances 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, although this varied significantly by jurisdiction – and the impact was also much less in most cases than during the 2020-21 school year. While we provide a brief summary of the remote learning that occurred during the 2021-22 school year, a more detailed discussion of this pandemic pedagogy can be found at Canadian eLearning Network's (CANeLearn) "Remote Learning Research Project."<sup>2</sup>

Finally, it is worth noting that this 2022 *State of the Nation: K-12 e-Learning* report returns to a more traditional publication cycle. Historically, the researchers begin the data collection process in the late Spring or early Summer as the school year is ending. Some jurisdictions will report their provincial/territorial data throughout the summer, but the bulk of responses are usually received in the Fall. This data is traditionally compiled in October and November and the report released in late November or early December. During this cycle of data collection the timeline is approximately a month behind – and there continues to be an increase in the number of jurisdictions that failed to respond or provided incomplete data or data from the previous school year. Having said that, the data collection for the 2021-22 school year is approximately two months ahead of the data collection for the 2020-21 school year (which was two months ahead of the data collection for the 2019-20 school year). So the pattern is that things are beginning to return to some semblance of normality with respect to the Ministries of Education and the school districts being able to respond to these research requests.

## 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.

The initial survey was sent to the Ministries of Education in June 2022. Officials at the Ministry responsible for e-learning programs prepare their response to the survey and suggest updates

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<sup>1</sup> 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).

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



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 during the Fall. As noted above, our timeline has continued to be 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.

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. In instances where the Ministry of Education fails to respond, the document analysis and interviews with key stakeholders become the primary source of data collection for the jurisdictional profiles. Table 1 provides a summary of the jurisdictional data collection over the past five years, which will give readers a sense of the impact that the pandemic has had.

*Table 1. Data collection sources for the State of the Nation: K-12 E-Learning in Canada since 2018*

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
NL	MoE/KS/DA	MoE/KS/DA	MoE/KS/DA	MoE/KS/DA	KS/DA
NS	MoE	MoE	MoE/DA	MoE/DA	MoE
PE	MoE/KS	MoE/KS	KS/DA	KS/DA	MoE
NB	MoE	MoE/DA	MoE/DA	MoE/DA	MoE
QC	MoE/KS	MoE/KS/DA	MoE/KS/DA	MoE/KS/DA	KS
ON	MoE/KS/DA	MoE/KS/DA	MoE/KS/DA	MoE/KS/DA	MoE/KS/DA
MB	MoE	MoE/DA	MoE/DA	MoE/DA	MoE
SK	MoE/KS	MoE/KS	MoE/KS	MoE/KS	MoE/KS
AB	MoE/KS/DA	MoE/KS/DA	MoE/KS/DA	MoE/KS/DA	KS/DA
BC	MoE	MoE/KS/DA	MoE/KS/DA	MoE/KS/DA	MoE
YT	KS	KS	MoE/KS/DA	KS/DA	MoE/KS
NT	MoE	MoE/KS	MoE/KS/DA	MoE/KS/DA	MoE/DA
NU	MoE	KS/DA	MoE/KS/DA	MoE/KS/DA	DA
Federal	INAC/KS	KS/DA	ISC/KS/DA	ISC/KS	ISC/KS

MoE – Ministry of Education; KS – Key stakeholders; DA – Document analysis;  
INAC – Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada/ISC – Indigenous Services Canada

*Shaded block indicates incomplete data or data from an earlier school year provided*

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 2021-22 data collection cycle, the survey was sent to all contacts on three occasions from October through December 2022. 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 2021-22 is provided in Table 2.

*Table 2. Individual program survey responses for 2021-22*

	Total Number of Programs	Number of Programs Responding	Response Rate
NL	2	0	0%
NS	2	0	0%
PE	1	0	0%
NB	2	1	50%
QC	5+	3	60%
ON	~70	9	13%
MB	~38	1	3%
SK	27	4	5%
AB	46	13	28%
BC	71	10	14%
YT	2	0	0%
NT	1	0	0%
NU	0	-	-
Federal	4	3	75%
<i>Total</i>	271	44	16%

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 <http://k12sotn.ca/data/>

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

## How To Read this Document

The goal of the 2022 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.

## National Overview

Since 2011 the annual *State of the Nation: K-12 e-Learning in Canada* study has received consistent participation from the majority of 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 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 2021-22 school year was only 16%, which continues to be among the lowest response rates since the individual survey was introduced. However, over the past twelve 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 43% of the programs in Canada (see Table 3). 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 3. 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	42	60%
MB	~38	9	24%
SK	27	14	52%
AB	46	25	54%
BC	71	51	72%
YT	2	2	100%
NT	1	1	100%
NU	0	-	-
Federal	5	5	100%
<i>Total</i>	372	160	43%

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. Additionally, over the past year or two there has been a significant growth in the number of educational bodies providing K-12 distance learning, and the project team has not been able to identify these news providers or may not have solid contacts for these providers. 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.

## Nature of K-12 E-Learning Regulation

The specific nature of regulation of K-12 distance, online, and blended learning has remained quite stable over the fifteen year period that the *State of the Nation: K-12 e-Learning in Canada* report has been active. 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. Table 4 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 4. 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	✓			

This is not to suggest that the actual regulations have remained stable. Few provinces have made major changes to how K-12 distance, online, and blended learning is regulated. However, the nature of those regulations have changed significantly – and, in some cases, multiple times – over the past 15 years. For example, following the decision to end support for the Alberta Distance Learning Centre, which resulted in the programs closure at the end of the 2020-21 school year, Alberta Education revised its *Funding Manual for School Authorities* during the

2020-21 school year to introduce a grant program to encourage school authorities to develop their own distance learning capacity (Alberta Education, 2020). This program was extended during the 2021-22 school years, and the *Funding Manual for School Authorities* was further revised to account for – and even encourage – enrollment of students from other school authorities (Alberta Education, 2021).

The other two jurisdictions that experienced regulatory changes in K-12 distance and online learning were Ontario and British Columbia. In the case of Ontario 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. Late in the 2021-22 school year, the Ministry of Education released Policy/Program Memorandum 167 (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2022), which – among other things – outlined the specific processes and procedures for implementing the online learning graduation requirement and opt-out process for students. Similarly, the 2021-22 school year marked the first year that Bill 8 was fully enacted in British Columbia. Beginning in 2018, following significant consultation, the original implementation of legislative changes to both the *School Act* and the *Independent School Act* were initially delayed due to COVID-19. The legislation updated the terminology from distributed learning to online learning. Additionally, the 2021-22 school year began the first interim year where some online schools will be converted to Provincial Online Learning Schools with the authorization to enroll students province-wide, while others will be converted to District Online Learning Schools under a new authorization to serve students in their own school district. Finally, a new funding and accountability framework will be introduced.

The remaining jurisdictions saw little or no change in the nature of regulation.

### **Level of K-12 Distance/Online Learning Activity**

Fifteen 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



**Single provincial program**

**Primarily district-based programs**

**Combination of provincial and district-based programs**

**Use online learning programs from other provinces**

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. 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 Ontario, Alberta, and British Columbia). The one change that has occurred during the 2021-22 school year was the change of Alberta from a “combination of provincial and district-based programs” to “primarily district-based programs” as a result of the closure of the Alberta Distance Learning Centre (although the *Centre francophone d’éducation à distance* does still operate at a provincial level).

It is also important to note that the distinction between “primarily district-based programs” and “combination of provincial and district-based programs” is becoming quite blurred. For example, in Alberta while there isn't a single English-language provincial program whose mission is focused on serving students province-wide, the changes to the funding mechanism in Alberta encourage all district-based distance learning programs to enroll students from outside of their own geographic region. While the province of Saskatchewan ceased operating their province-wide distance learning programs in 2009-10, but all distance learning programs operated by the school divisions have the ability to enroll students from anywhere in the province. Traditionally, the model of online learning in Ontario was similar (i.e., school board operated online learning programs that were permitted to enroll students from anywhere in the province). However, the “primarily district-based programs” label neglects the changing mission of the Independent Learning Centre. A similar issue will soon exist in British Columbia. Both District Online Learning Schools and Provincial Online Learning Schools are likely to be operated by school districts (i.e., “primarily district-based programs”), but those school district programs that are authorized as Provincial Online Learning Schools will be able to enroll students from anywhere in the province (i.e., would this make British Columbia a “combination of provincial and district-based programs” jurisdiction?). These are issues that the project team will need to consider in future reports.

In terms of the level of distance and online learning activity across Canada, the total K-12 population in Canada for 2021-22 was approximately 5.3 million students. Based on actual and estimated enrollment data, the number of students engaged in K-12 distance and online learning was 399,847 or 7.6% of the overall K-12 student population (see Table 5).

*Table 5. Summary of K-12 distance and/or online learning activity by jurisdiction for 2020-21*

	# of K-12 students	# enrolled in distance/online learning	Percent involvement
NL	63,536	936	1.5%
NS	129,121	2,761	2.1%
PE	20,131	~260	1.3%
NB	98,906	5,134	5.2%
QC	1,003,322	~55,000	5.5%
ON	2,056,055	~139,000	6.8%
MB	204,149	~8,000	3.9%
SK	186,084	19,142	10.3%
AB	733,599	~92,000	12.5%
BC	~667,000	73,744	11.1%
YT	5,456	~250	4.6%
NT	8,700	120	1.4%
NU	10,902	-	-
Federal	109,001	~3,500	3.2%
<i>Total</i>	<i>5,295,962</i>	<i>399,847</i>	<i>7.6%</i>

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, while historically Central Canada has consistently had participation levels near the national average, this year only Ontario fell into this category (although it is possible that Quebec might also be included in this category, as there were no student enrollment data provided by the *Québec Ministère de l'éducation et de l'Enseignement* for the 56 pilot projects that operated during the 2021-22 school year). Third, most jurisdictions in Atlantic Canada (i.e., Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador) and Northern Canada (i.e., Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut) have a relatively low proportion of K-12 students engaged in distance and online learning.

While Manitoba is a notable exception to these categories, it is Quebec that remains a true outlier. If the approximately 50,000 adult students engaged in distance learning from programs supported by the *Société de formation à distance des commissions scolaires du Québec* were not included, the number of known distance learning students in Quebec would decrease to approximately 5,000 or approximately 0.5% (i.e., half of 1% ) of all K-12 students in the province. Given there is no recent data available from programs such as *Centre de services scolaire de la Beauce-Etchemin* or *Écoles en réseau*, as well as the fact that the *Ministère de l'éducation et de l'Enseignement* was unable to provide any student data from the 56 pilot projects administered by 39 educational establishments and organizations, represents a lack of reliable data collection. However, as the Government of Quebec argued in the 2021 *Karounis c. Procureur Général du Québec* case, there is a general belief that distance learning is inferior to in person or classroom-based learning.

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 2021-22 school year continues a trend in the growth of the proportion of students engaged in K-12 distance and/or online learning (see Table 6 below).



Table 6. K-12 distance and/or online learning student enrollment in Canada

Year	# of distance education students	% of students engaged in distance education
1999-2000*	~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%
2021-22	399,847	7.6%

\* (Canadian Teachers Federation, 2000)

After years of relative stability in the proportion of students engaged in K-12 distance and/or online learning (i.e., from 4.9% in 2011-12 to 6.0% in 2019-20), the 2020-21 school year represented the highest proportion of students engaged in K-12 distance and/or online learning (as well as one of the most significant increases). At the time, it was suggested that based on the responses from both the Ministries of Education and the individual programs themselves, these enrollment figures were likely artificially inflated due to the pandemic and parents' concerns about the health of their students and families. This increase is likely given the marginal increase in the proportion of students engaged in K-12 distance and/or online learning during the 2021-22 school year.

The artificial pandemic-induced increase was also evidenced by the fact that the number of students engaged in K-12 distance and/or online learning during the 2021-22 school year decreased in most jurisdictions (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			
	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
NL	1,140	1,092	1,029	936
NS	2,381	2,241	3,319	2,761
PE	~100	133	~175	~260
NB	~3,270	~3,470	4,754	5,134
QC	~40,000	~35,000	~39,400	~55,000
ON	~89,000	~98,000	~122,000	~139,000
MB	~11,875	~13,749	~8,173	~8,000
SK	8,378	12,456	22,510	19,142
AB	75,806	82,857	97,527	~92,000
BC	~65,000	~59,000	~85,000	73,744
YT	170	234	389	~250
NT	130	131	92	120
NU	~70	19	~15	-
Federal	~2,000	~2,200	~3,000	~3,500
<i>Total</i>	<i>299,320</i>	<i>310,582</i>	<i>387,385</i>	<i>399,847</i>

With the exception of Ontario (which was only able to report data from the 2019-20 school year for the public school programs), most jurisdictions saw a slight decrease in the number of K-12 students engaged in distance and/or online learning in 2021-22. However, in most cases the number of students during the 2021-22 school year was still higher than the number of students during the 2019-20 school year – representing a net gain of students from the most recent school year compared to before the pandemic began. One notable exception to this pattern was Manitoba. Additionally, one of the interesting trends in Table 7 above (and in Table 8 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.

Further, as was noted in the 2021 *State of the Nation: K-12 e-Learning in Canada* report, 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. This is also assuming that the Government of Ontario is able to catch up on its reporting of distance and online learning enrollments in public school programs. Traditionally, during the Fall of one year, the Ministry of Education is only able to provide data for the second most recent school year (e.g., in the Fall of 2021, the Ministry was able to provide data for the 2019-20 school year). However, this year (i.e., Fall of 2022) the Ministry of Education is still only able to report on public school distance and online learning enrollment for the 2019-20 school year.

This means that there is no government data available from public school boards offering distance and online learning since the two course graduation requirement came into effect.

As with previous years, 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 8).

Table 8. Summary of K-12 distance and/or online learning activity over the past four years

	% students engaged in distance and/or online learning			
	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
NL	1.8%	1.7%	1.6%	1.5%
NS	2.0%	1.8%	2.7%	2.1%
PE	0.5%	0.7%	0.8%	1.3%
NB	3.3%	3.5%	4.8%	5.2%
QC	4.0%	3.5%	3.9%	5.5%
ON	4.4%	4.8%	5.9%	6.8%
MB	5.7%	6.6%	4.4%	3.9%
SK	4.5%	6.7%	12.2%	10.3%
AB	10.6%	11.2%	13.3%	12.5%
BC	10.2%	10.8%	12.6%	11.1%
YT	3.1%	4.2%	7.1%	4.6%
NT	1.4%	1.5%	1.1%	1.4%
NU	0.6%	0.2%	0.1%	-
Federal	1.9%	2.0%	2.8%	3.2%
Total	5.9%	6.0%	7.3%	7.6%

For example, there were slight decreases in the proportion of K-12 students enrolled in distance and online learning during the 2021-22 school year in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, and the Yukon. The proportions remained roughly the same in Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, and federally. The exceptions to this trend were in Quebec and Ontario. In Quebec the increase can be attributed to more recent data obtained from the *Société de formation à distance des commissions scolaires du Québec*. In the case of Ontario, the increase is attributed to more students engaged in both private online schools and the Independent Learning Centre. However, as noted in Table 7, in most cases the proportion of students during the 2021-22 school year was still higher than the proportion of students during the 2019-20 school year (with Manitoba being the exception) – representing a net gain of students from the most recent school year compared to before the pandemic began.

What is interesting – and what the above data does not reveal – is the significant increase in some jurisdictions with respect to the amount of choice that students and their families have in terms of distance learning providers.

*Table 9. Number of K-12 distance learning programs per jurisdiction over the past five years*

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
NL	1	1	1	2	2
NS	2	2	2	2	2
PE	0	0	0	1	1
NB	2	2	2	2	2
QC	4	5+	6+	7+	44+
ON	~81	~81	~70	~70	248
MB	~38	~38	~38	~38	~38
SK	15	14	16	27	36
AB	32	33	34	36	46
BC	74	74	69	68	71
YT	2	2	2	2	2
NT	1	1	1	1	1
02	0	0	0	0	0
Federal	5	5	5	4	4

As Table 9 illustrates, if you exclude the provinces with one or two province-wide programs, there was a stable growth in the number of K-12 distance learning programs in most jurisdictions prior to the pandemic. For example, both Saskatchewan and Alberta saw a small increase in the number of distance learning programs from 2017-18 and 2019-20, while there appeared to be some rationalization of programs in Ontario and British Columbia. However, the trend in some jurisdictions from the 2019-20 school year to the 2021-22 school year has been quite different.

The increase in distance learning providers is understandable in some jurisdictions. For example, following the passage of Bill 144 in 2017, Quebec went from one pilot approved project by one educational establishment or organization in 2019-20 to two pilot approved projects by one or two educational establishments and/or organizations in 2020-21 to 56 distance learning pilot projects by more than 39 educational establishments and organizations in 2021-22. Additionally, it is unknown how many of these are actual distance learning programs or the extent to which the pilot project is truly focused on the provision of distance learning. So the number of programs could be much smaller. The province of Ontario is another example where the growth of distance learning programs may be explained by regulatory changes. The announcements that students would be required to take four courses in order to graduate from high school in March 2019 (i.e., during the 2018-19 school year), which was reduced to two courses in November 2019 (i.e., during the 2019-20 school year). This requirement came into effect for students who began grade 9 in September 2020 (i.e., during the 2020-21 school year), and the actual implementation Policy/Program Memorandum 167 was eventually released in February 2022 (i.e., during the 2021-22 school year). These regulatory changes likely had as much of an impact on the increase in K-12 distance learning programs as the pandemic. It is also worth noting that there are 60 English-speaking and 12 French-speaking school boards in the province. Traditionally, programs offered by these school boards – as well as the Independent Learning Centre – represented the bulk of the approximately 70-80 distance learning programs in Ontario. The roughly 250% increase in the number of programs likely represents a significant increase in the number of privately operated K-12 distance learning programs.

The provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta are the jurisdictions where the pandemic appears to have played a significant role in increasing the number of K-12 distance learning providers that are available. The number of programs in Alberta increased by approximately 30% over the past two years, but the number of K-12 students engaged in distance learning has only increased by between 15% and 20%. This is of course an approximation, as Alberta Education did not provide updated data on distance learning enrollments for the 2021-22 school year. Additionally, the increase in the number of K-12 distance learning programs could also be a result of the closure of the Alberta Distance Learning Centre at the end of the 2020-21 school year or the changes in the funding formula in recent years that appear to encourage school districts to enroll students from outside of their own district (as opposed to students from within their own district). In the case of Saskatchewan, the number of distance learning programs have increased by approximately 33% from the 2020-21 school year to the 2021-22 school year, and 125% from the 2019-20 school year to the 2021-22 school year. As has been reported in the annual *State of the Nation: K-12 e-Learning in Canada* reports for those years, including this current report, 'there have been no regulatory changes in the province of Saskatchewan.' As noted above there was an increase of approximately 80% in the number of students enrolled in distance learning from the 2019-20 school year to the 2020-21 school year. However, there was only an increase of three in the number of school divisions offering distance learning programs, which suggests that school divisions created multiple programs to address the differing needs of their students. With the exception of Saskatchewan, it appears that the pandemic may not have had the lasting impact on K-12 distance and online learning that many had predicted, and that the changes being seen in the number of students engaged and the number of providers of K-12 distance and online learning may have more to do with legislative and regulatory changes in recent years.

### **Level of K-12 Blended Learning Activity**

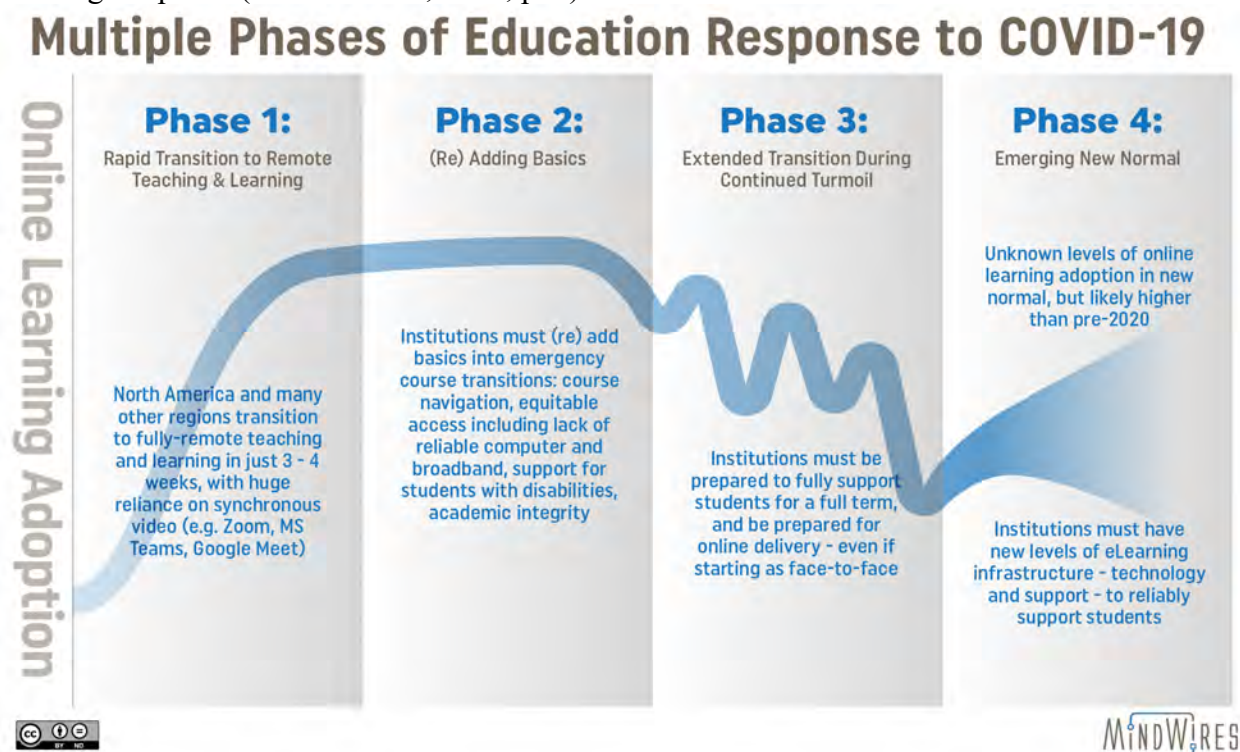
As we have discussed in previous reports, data on the level of blended learning has been collected in one form or another since the 2014-15 school year. However, the vast majority of jurisdictions do not formally track participation in blended learning programs and the data that is collected is quite 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 2021-22 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 over the past three school years.

## K-12 Remote Learning

As indicated above, the 2021-22 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 three school 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.<sup>3</sup> If the pandemic response is considered in phases (see Figure 2), it is important to begin by situating the 2020-21 school year.

*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:

<sup>3</sup> 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/>

*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. 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).

## **2021-22 School Year – Lessons Learner Largely Ignored<sup>4</sup>**

The 2021-22 school year saw the continuation of putting all efforts and focus to in-person instruction, again with minimal focus on preparing for the ‘toggle’ described in Phase 3. Indeed, with continuing disruptions and school closures, such as the October 2021 public employee’s strike in New Brunswick (Brown & April, 2021), the argument could be made that few jurisdictions were even thinking about a ‘new normal’ and the ability to actually pivot swiftly

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<sup>4</sup> Taken from LaBonte et al. (2022) from pages 15-17.

between in-school and remote learning with limited impact on student engagement and learning. In Ontario, in the government's guide to reopening schools (Davidson, 2021), school boards were required to consider remote learning when schools closed due to inclement weather. In short, the need to effectively plan for and train teachers for a model of 'toggling' between in-person schooling and remote learning could not have been more clear.

There were several specific examples in the 2021-22 school year where jurisdictions provided detail and direction in their announced plans for the 2021-22 school year. For example, both Nunavut and the Yukon Ministries published detailed and descriptive plans, offering a variety of instructional options to accommodate all possibilities associated with a realistic understanding of the toggle nature of the 2021-22 school year. Nunavut's 35-page document outlined a variety of strategies to prevent the introduction of COVID-19 into schools, how to respond when COVID-19 is detected in the school, how to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 once present, and how to address potential learning disruption to individual students, classes, or the entire school (Nunavut Department of Education, 2021a). Further, recognizing that the 2019-20 and 2020-21 school years were both disrupted and that unequal levels of learning may have occurred, the Nunavut Department of Education (2021b) released *Learning to Be Together Again Support for Nunavut Schools in 2021-22*, which began with a focus on 'recovery learning,' or the "responsive process that enables students to transition back to in-class learning, while addressing mental and physical well-being and student achievement" (p. 5). The goals of recovery learning were to determine where students were in their understanding and then to offer students flexible avenues to help them achieve where they need to be. In addition to the recovery learning aspects, the document also focused on how to incorporate blended learning and remote learning – depending on the local epidemiology.

Similarly, Yukon Education (2021) in their *School during COVID-19: Guidelines for the 2021–22 School Year* provided clear guidelines for "What school looks like for ALL students" and "What school looks like at individual schools" in the case of 100%, 50%, 20% and 0% school capacity. Essentially, there were detailed descriptions for the public health measures in place for in-person learning, how schools would operate and learning would occur when there was a need for hybrid learning with half capacity and very low capacity, and then the planning needed for remote learning to occur. Additionally, even when there was no disruption, the document outlined measures that would be undertaken to incorporate more blended learning into the classroom, which it was argued would make hybrid learning and remote learning less of an adjustment. These types of plans were much more realistic in terms of how the 2021-22 school year did progress, as compared to the perspective that "students must return to class... barring 'only the most catastrophic of circumstances'" (CBC News, 2021, para. 1). In fact, other than Saskatchewan, Yukon was the only jurisdiction that opened schools in January as scheduled and without any additional measures or remote learning requirement. This does suggest that the plans in the Yukon did allow the toggling between in-person learning and remote learning.

Additionally, it is also worth noting that there were some examples of specific moves to support the ability of teachers and schools to 'toggle.' For example, when the 2021-22 school year launched in Nova Scotia, 75% of parents surveyed reported having reliable bandwidth in their homes based on improvements made the year before (Montreuil et al., 2021) and technology was distributed in instances where it was not already available. Additionally, this connectivity was



coupled with a clear direction to upskill teachers, along with the provision of provincial online tools and curriculum resources that were made available to all teachers with some designed for parents as well. In fact, Nova Scotia arguably was one of the only jurisdictions that demonstrated the ability to ‘toggle’ between learning modalities and adapt to changing circumstances as described in Phase 3 of the pandemic response.

In stark contrast, after the Ontario Ministry of Education announced that all school boards in the province would offer a remote learning option during the 2021-22 school year, the concurrent teaching or hybrid learning model that emerged in 2020-21 was the sole remote learning option planned for by many boards (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2021; Wilson, 2021). While many boards already offered optional online learning programs that were quickly doubling in size, some boards were unable to offer an online program that covered the full curriculum (King, 2021; Simcoe County District School Board, 2021). Further, many school boards lacked the necessary funding to create or offer an online or remote learning program (Wong, 2021). In essence, the hybrid learning model was the only way that many school boards were able to meet the Ministry’s remote learning policy requirement within the board’s financial means. Even before the start of the new school year, the hybrid instructional model had fallen under criticism (Stewart, 2021) and teachers unions spoke out about its negative impact on both teachers and student learning (Fox, 2021).

Given the epidemiological realities of a pandemic, any pandemic, it should have been expected that the 2021-22 school year would be another disrupted year of year schooling. However, politicians and policymakers across the country – with only a few exceptions – continued to rely upon a framework that planned for in-person learning with few efforts to mitigate the potential for disruption. Further, when disruption inevitably occurred, politicians and policymakers relied upon the ‘sweat equity’ of school level teachers and administrators to overcome their lack of adequate planning and preparation (Bayrami, 2022; Bocking, 2022; Campbell et al., 2022; Fédération du personnel de l’enseignement privé, 2022; Hodgson-Bautista et al., 2022; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2020, 2021). This failure on the part of many jurisdictions does not bode well on their ability to be in a position to toggle between various states of in-person and remote learning during the 2022-23 school year or their ability to transition into the Phase 4 or the ‘Emerging New Normal.’

## Brief Issue Papers

### *Distance Learning and the Quebec Karounis Decision*

In one of the first court cases in Canada to focus on K-12 distance learning, the 2021 *Karounis c. Procureur Général du Québec* sought to attack the constitutionality of the exemption that only those students with medical conditions, or those with whom they reside, would be exempt from in-person attendance. While the decision focused solely on the argument of whether the Government of Quebec violated section 7 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms by implementing the regulation, this decision may have broader implications for education in Quebec, in general, and for all those in support of distance learning. It will likely serve well those lawmakers in support of in-person school attendance since the Court generally agreed with the evidence produced by the Quebec government to argue that the benefits of in-person attendance over distance learning. Read more at <https://k12sotn.ca/papers/distance-learning-and-the-quebec-karounis-decision/>

### *Ontario Policy/Program Memorandum 167 – Mandatory eLearning*

A 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 2023-24. With this announcement, Ontario became the only jurisdiction in Canada with an online learning graduation requirement. On February 1, 2022 the Ontario government issued Policy/Program Memorandum 167 to explain to Ontario K-12 educators and leaders implementation of the online learning graduation requirement and opt-out process. To address the massive increase in e-learning, the Ontario eLearning Consortium, now central to the implementation of the e-learning mandate, has grown immensely and what began as a grassroots partnership of Ontario school boards in 2005 has now grown to include all but 5 of the public and Catholic school boards, representing students who reside in both metropolitan and rural areas. *Consortium d'apprentissage virtuel de langue française de l'Ontario*, a francophone consortium of all 12 public francophone boards, has been offering online courses to students and adults since 2010 and will be responsible for meeting the mandate for the francophone boards. Full implementation of Policy/Program Memorandum 167 still has many questions yet to be answered including how to scale existing e-learning courses, where students will access and work from, if there is sufficient hardware, supervision, and support, and what impact will increased online enrollments have on face-to-face classes? Read more at <https://k12sotn.ca/papers/ontario-policy-program-memorandum-167-mandatory-elearning/>

### *Online Learning Changes in British Columbia*

The transformation of online learning delivery in British Columbia's K-12 sector has been underway since 2018 and, while legislation was passed on July 1, 2021, when the former distributed learning policies were replaced by interim online learning policies. The timeline for full implementation has shifted significantly as a result of feedback provided with the full effect of changes not implemented until June 30, 2023. The future landscape will see the implementation of designated Provincial Online Learning Schools (POLS) will be required to sign new agreements with the Ministry to be able to enroll students within or from outside their

home district, while District Online Learning Schools (DOLS) will only be able to enroll students from within their own district. POLS will have to follow a new accountability and quality assurance (AQA) model and to use the provincial LMS (D2L *Brightspace*) for students enrolled from outside of a school district at a cost of \$10/student. DOLS will continue to have a choice of the LMS for their own in-district students and not be required to follow the AQA. Read more at <https://k12sotn.ca/papers/online-learning-changes-in-british-columbia/>

For these, and all of the previous issue papers, please go to <https://k12sotn.ca/papers/>

### **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 discussion of the various legislative and regulatory documents that govern how these distance, online and blended learning programs operate;
- a description of the distance, online and blended learning programs operating in that jurisdiction;
- a summary of the jurisdiction's remote learning response during the 2021-22 school year (i.e., summarized from LaBonte et al., 2021; LaBonte et al., 2022).
- 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; and
- an overview of the jurisdiction's policies related to the provision of e-learning in and to other jurisdictions.

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

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### **Newfoundland and Labrador (NL)**

Population: 521,875

Number of K-12 Schools: 252

Number of K-12 Students: 63,536

Number of K-12 Distance Learning Programs: 2

Number of K-12 Distance Learning: 936

## **e-Learning Updates**

There have been no significant regulatory changes in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. 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 2021-22 school year there were 912 students registered in 45 different secondary courses, as well as 24 students who were engaged with different 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**

### *Fall 2021 Reopening*


In the planning for the Fall 2021 re-opening, the government removed most of the restrictions that had been in place in schools (e.g., no vaccination requirement, masking mandate, no cohorts or physical distancing requirements, resumption of co-curricular and extracurricular activities, etc.). The goal was a return to full-time in-person learning, with remote learning as an option only for students who could not attend due to medical reasons. The Department of Education did offer teachers professional learning opportunities in the use of digital tools for online learning (e.g., *Google Docs*, *Google Meet*, and *Google Classroom*). The government planned that if the pandemic conditions changed schools could be determined as 'high-risk transmission' or 'scenario 2 or 3,' and stricter health restrictions would again be implemented. In scenario 2, blended or hybrid learning would begin, with a staggered schedule of in-person and remote learning. Scenario 3 would include fully remote learning. For fully remote learning, a sample schedule was released by the English School District which outlined the requirements for both synchronous and asynchronous learning activities. Students who needed digital devices were able to receive a Chromebook on loan from their school district (LaBonte et al., 2021).

### *2021-22 School Year*

As the new school year progressed, school closures for COVID outbreaks continued with scenario 2 and the teacher 's union began calling for community use reductions, increased cleaning, and a return to required masking. Schools remained open to in-person learning until the

return to school from December holidays when, due to increasing community spread of the Omicron variant of COVID-19, schools were closed and students returned to remote learning. The return to in-person was delayed until January 25, 2022 to allow time for the distribution of rapid test kits. All school staff and students were required to take two tests at home approximately 72 hours apart and to self-isolate if they tested positive. Although some parents continued to demand an option for remote learning, all announced efforts were focused on a return to in-person learning with government citing poor past experiences with hybrid learning and challenges for teachers. Instead, the government announced the hiring of additional teachers to create new junior and senior high school resources to support learning during intermittent school closures. February saw the gradual release of community restrictions across Canada and the Newfoundland-Labrador government's gradual release included a return to team sports for K-12 students in late February followed by a full relaxation of all restrictions through the remaining part of the school year (LaBonte et al., 2022).

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

	<p><b>Nova Scotia (NS)</b></p> <p>Population: 1,002,586  Number of K-12 Schools: 370  Number of K-12 Students: 129,121</p> <p>Number of K-12 Distance Learning Programs: 2  Number of K-12 Distance Learning Students: 2,761</p>
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## 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, during the 2021-22 school year there were approximately 2,061 students enrolled in offerings from the Nova Scotia Virtual School and over 700 students enrolled in courses offered through the correspondence studies program (which was its final year of operation). Additionally, there were approximately 129,000 students with accounts in various blended learning tools offered by the Department.

## Remote Learning

### *Fall 2021 Reopening*

All public schools returned to in-person learning for the 2021-22 school year, with full capacity class sizes and no cohort grouping. Extracurricular activities, school assemblies, and music continued as normal, with an emphasis on learning outdoors as much as possible. In the case of rising COVID-19 cases, schools could return to 'at-home' learning consisting of a blend of

synchronous and asynchronous learning, with the amount dependent on grade level. For example, the pre-primary grade packages would focus on play-based learning materials; primary to grade 3 would include two hours of work per day with one hour online; grades 4-6 would include three hours of work daily with one and half hours online; grades 7-9 would include four hours of work daily with two hours online; and grades 10-12 would have 50% of their time online. Reporting and provincial assessments would continue (LaBonte et al., 2021).

### *2021-22 School Year*

Schools remained open to in-person learning until the return to school from December holidays when, due to increasing community spread of the Omicron variant of COVID-19, schools were closed and students returned to remote learning with students and parents relying on the resources posted at the government's *Learning from Home 2021-22* website (see <https://backtoschool.ednet.ns.ca/learning-from-home> ). School reopening was delayed until January 10, 2022 “to build confidence by purchasing HEPA filtration systems for schools and classrooms with passive ventilation systems, and by ensuring a good supply of 3-ply masks for all children and staff, including medical masks for staff.” However, on January 10 in-person learning was further delayed until January 17 with students returning to remote learning using the province's model of ‘at-home’ learning consisting of a blend of synchronous and asynchronous learning, with the amount dependent on grade level. As February saw the gradual release of community restrictions across Canada, the Nova Scotia government began Phase 2 of its gradual release March 7, 2022 that included increasing gathering and capacity limits combined with the use of rapid tests. Mask requirements were lifted in public spaces March 21, but not in schools until May 24 (LaBonte et al., 2022).

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



### **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

### **e-Learning Updates**

There have been no regulatory changes in the province of Prince Edward Island. 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 February 2021, the Ministry of Education and Life Long Learning piloted a new virtual school, again focused primarily 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 (although some of these enrollments may have been from the 2022-23 school year).

Additionally, students also continued to enroll in programs offered from New Brunswick. Based on figures provided by the New Brunswick Department of Education, Early Learning and Culture, during the 2021-22 school year there were approximately 220 students enrolled in either the English-language or French-language distance education programs.

## **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).

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

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## **New Brunswick (NB)**

Population: 781,024

Number of K-12 Schools: 307

Number of K-12 Students: 98,906

Number of K-12 Distance Learning Programs: 2

Number of K-12 Distance Learning Students: ~5134

## **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 2021-22 school year there were approximately 2,800 regular students enrolled in the Anglophone program, while there 1,584 students enrolled in the Francophone program. Additionally, the Anglophone program offered a free online summer program that allowed 750 interested high school students and recent graduates the opportunity to take one of 21 courses offered by 24 teachers. Finally, a single school district began a pilot project to deliver Advanced Placement (AP) courses in a primarily synchronous fashion across a small network of schools. In terms of blended learning, all students are enrolled in *MS Teams* sites for each courses through the integration with the student information system and individual teachers can request access to the distance learning content in the D2L's *Brightspace* environment to use in their classroom teaching. The Ministry tracks the number of courses requested by teachers, but it does not track the number of students enrolled in those courses.

## **Remote Learning**

### *Fall 2021 Reopening*

Schools returned to in-person learning for the 2021-22 school year. Class size returned to full capacity for K-5 with no 'bubbles' or cohorts in grades 6-8. High school students returned with full time, in-person attendance. Music programs and extracurricular activities continued without restrictions, though masks were required indoors and assemblies were still not permitted. Should students return to remote learning due to an outbreak, K-8 students would engage in a mix of 'virtual and paper-based learning' or learning kits, while high school students would have a blend of synchronous and project-based learning (LaBonte et al., 2021).

### *2021-22 School Year*

The Fall reopening plan remained in place and for the most part in-person learning continued, with the exceptions of a Canadian Union of Public Employees strike in November and/or local community outbreaks when students returned to remote learning. The reopening of schools after the December holidays was delayed until January 10, and schools returned to home learning due to increasing community spread of the Omicron variant of COVID-19. The return to in-person was further delayed until January 31 to allow time for purchase and installation of 2,000 portable



HEPA filters for classrooms along with a supply of KN95 masks as all students were required to wear masks while in school as well as outdoors for grade 9-12 students. February saw the gradual release of community restrictions across Canada and the New Brunswick government lifted mandatory restrictions March 14 that included a return to full physical education and music classes and no requirement to wear a mask while in school (LaBonte et al. 2022).

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

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## **Quebec (QC)**

Population: 8,572,054

Number of K-12 Schools: 3,102

Number of K-12 Students: 1,003,322

Number of K-12 Distance Learning Programs: 44+

Number of K-12 Distance Learning Students: ~55,000+

## **e-Learning Updates**

There have been no regulatory changes in the province of Quebec. During the 2021-22 school year, there were 56 distance learning pilot projects, spread over 39 educational establishments and organizations. Documents suggest that there were at least 1650 students involved in some of these pilot projects. However, the data for the number of students involved in these projects was not available as of November 2022.

Additionally, during the 2020-21 school year it was estimated there were approximately 50,000 adult students enrolled in programming supported by SOFAD, as well as 495 students enrolled in online learning offered by LEARN and 250 students in courses offered by the Quebec Online School. Finally, the latest data available indicate that the *Centre d'apprentissage en ligne de la CSBE* enrolled approximately 1,500 students.

## **Remote Learning**

### *Fall 2021 Reopening*

Quebec schools returned to in-person learning for the 2021-22 school year and all extracurricular activities resumed with secondary students required to have a vaccine passport to play in some sporting events, such as competitions. To 'avoid' online learning, masks in schools were made mandatory. Students with medical exemptions in the six English school boards were allowed the option to attend remote learning via LEARN Québec – a distance learning non-profit educational service that was established before the pandemic. As of the Fall 2021, when schools closed due to a COVID-19 outbreak, a 'virtual-classwork system' had not been fully implemented.

However, students who needed learning devices were able to receive them from their schools (LaBonte et al., 2021).

### *2021-22 School Year*

On October 1, 2021 the government increased masking requirements in some regions for students in elementary grades, but schools remained open to in-person learning with only local closures based on COVID case numbers. On December 31, 2021 the Quebec government put new measures in place to curb the spread of the Omicron variant of COVID-19 that included curfews between 10:00 pm and 5 am. Scheduled school return January 5, 2022 saw schools closed for face-to-face instruction until January 17, 2022 without specific mention of remote learning options by the government, only that “if possible, online learning will continue until face-to-face instruction resumes.” The January 17 return included mandatory masking requirements for staff and students, which were later lifted March 7. Many educators and parents reported increasing concern for in-person learning as cases of the Omicron variant continued to rise, however, the government remained adamant that schools were safe and additional closure would lead to greater consequences with loss of learning for students. As an additional measure, on May 5 the government announced additional funding for tutoring services to mitigate the loss of learning due to school closure (LaBonte et al., 2022).

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

#### **Online Tutorials and Responding to the Special Needs of Students**

Last year, in what might be considered the third year of the pandemic, LEARN offered over 36,000 tutorial sessions to students in the English community of Quebec. LEARN, a non-profit educational organization mandated to serve the educational needs of the English community, has been providing online tutorials for over ten years to students at both the elementary and secondary school levels. The 30-minute sessions have proven so successful that LEARN has seen an annual growth rate of 25% over the last three years, and this year expect to offer over 42,000 afternoon and evening sessions provided by teachers from every region of the province. The teachers offering the tutoring sessions report that they get to know students better than in their regular classes where they may see 150 students a day and where there is little opportunity to develop the relationships they know to be essential.



## **Ontario (ON)**

Population: 14,723,497

Number of K-12 Schools: 4850

Number of K-12 Students: 2,020,245

Number of K-12 Distance Learning Programs: 248

Number of K-12 Distance Learning Students: ~139,000

## **e-Learning Updates**

There have been no significant regulatory changes in the province of Ontario. The requirement that Ontario students take two online credits to graduate from secondary school beginning with students graduating in the 2023-24 school year came into effect (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2019). However, as a part of Policy/Program Memorandum 167, the Ontario Ministry of Education (2022) stated that:

The Ministry recognizes the extraordinary circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, this Policy/Program Memorandum recognizes up to one secondary school credit completed by Grade 9 students in the 2020-21 school year during the province-wide school closures (from April 2021 to June 2021) may be counted towards the graduation requirement. Schools should select one of these credits and record it in the system they use locally for tracking the requirement and reflect the completion of the selected credit when reporting through the Ontario School Information System (OnSIS) towards the student's online learning graduation requirement. The course itself does not need to be flagged as an "online course". It will be counted under the "Diploma Requirements" "Online Learning Graduation Requirement" section of the provincial report card template. (para. 15)

Even though data was received in November 2022, the most recent data that the Ministry of Education was able to provide was from the 2019-20 school year. Based on that data, approximately 87,000 students earned credits online through public district school boards and approximately 18,000 credits were earned by students enrolled in online courses offered by inspected private schools. Additionally, there were more than 22,000 students enrolled in distance courses offered by the Independent Learning Centre from April 1, 2020 to March 30, 2021 (i.e., the most recent year was not available). Finally, there were 1,306,497 unique student logins in the provincial learning management system from either classroom-based or online students.

## **Remote Learning**

### *Fall 2021 Reopening*

All of Ontario's public schools from K-12 returned to full in-person learning in the Fall of 2021 with masks mandatory and social distancing as much as possible, including staggered schedules to limit student numbers in hallways and cafeterias. Secondary students still worked in quadesters, taking two courses at a time, and several school boards opted for hybrid learning

for secondary schools. Caregivers had the option to keep their child in remote learning via each board's virtual school, which was mandated by the province as an option within all public school boards. In case of active COVID-19 within schools, boards were required to provide students the opportunity for remote learning with 300 minutes of learning using both synchronous and asynchronous activities and have plans in place so they could move to remote learning quickly to ensure continuity of learning for students. Extra-curricular activities and sports were encouraged by the Ministry to continue and all student assessments and standardized testing resumed as normal (LaBonte et al., 2021).

### *2021-22 School Year*

As the new school year progressed amidst school closures for COVID local outbreaks, the number of children choosing to learn remotely increased. Local school closures resulted from staff shortages and student absenteeism due to the spread of the virus in many communities across the province. As a result, the Government of Ontario signed an agreement with the Ontario Teachers' Federation to temporarily increase the number of days a retired teacher could work to expand the pool of supply teachers available to address rising teacher absenteeism due to illness and self-isolation. Provincially, schools remained open to in-person learning but masking was required. Just prior to the return to school from December holidays, due to increasing community spread of the Omicron variant of COVID-19 school opening was delayed for two days. Later it was decided to close schools to in-person learning with students returning to remote learning until January 17, 2022. That return saw some limited student cohort grouping, reduction of 'high contact' sports, and the requirement for students to self-isolate if they had symptoms. Interestingly, schools in the Greater Toronto area did not open until the next day due to heavy snow. February saw the gradual release of community restrictions across Canada and the Ontario government release included relaxing school masking and increasing indoor event capacities. Further plans announced February 17 were to address learning loss during prior school closures that included tutoring support. On April 14 the government passed legislation designed to improve capacity to keep buildings open, particularly schools, and the mask requirement for school students and staff was removed, followed by a removal of all restrictions on June 11 (LaBonte et al., 2022).

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

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## **Manitoba (MB)**

Population: 1,380,000

Number of K-12 Schools: 824

Number of K-12 Students: 204,149

Number of K-12 Distance Learning Programs: ~38

Number of K-12 Distance Learning Students: ~8,000

## **e-Learning Updates**

There have been no regulatory changes in the province of Manitoba. However, following a comprehensive review of the K-12 education system by the Manitoba Commission on K to 12 Education (2020) that concluded in March 2020 with the *Our Children's Success: Manitoba's Future* report, Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning (2022) released *Manitoba's K to 12 Education Action Plan* in April 2022. This report called for, among other things, the province to “develop a provincial remote learning strategy, including an online high school, to enhance access to programming and learning across the province” (pp. 15 & 23).

Each school division in the province continues to participate in one or more of the three distance education program options. During the 2021-22 school year, the Teacher Mediate Option (TMO) and the Web-based Course (WBC) Option continued to operate at a provincial level. 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 ~8,000 students. Manitoba Education still does not formally track participation in blended learning.

## **Remote Learning**

### *Fall 2021 Reopening*

Schools in Manitoba returned to in-person learning for the 2021-22 school year. Online learning continued for students (or other household members) who were immunocompromised, and they could access online learning materials through the Manitoba Remote Learning Center. Remote learning in any other instances would be used as a ‘last resort’ should COVID-19 cases increase and requirements included a mix of synchronous and asynchronous learning. The province released *Manitoba Education Standards for Remote Learning* with guidelines to be followed by schools in instances where temporary remote learning was necessary and all schools would be responsible for making technology accessible to students, but if technology was not available print-based materials would be provided. All student assessments and reporting continue as normal (LaBonte et al., 2021).

### *2021-22 School Year*

As the new school year progressed, masks were required in school and on buses and there were local school closures for COVID outbreaks. Limits for indoor gathering in rural communities with lower vaccination rates were introduced to curb spread of the virus in those areas. With the

spread of the Omicron variant of COVID-19 in December, school reopening was a phased-in approach with high risk students and those of critical service personnel returning January 10, 2022 and all other students returning January 17. Staff were required to wear medical masks and only local school closures continued. February saw the gradual release of community restrictions across Canada and the Manitoba government lifted all public health orders and restrictions on March 15 (LaBonte et al., 2022).

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

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### **Saskatchewan (SK)**

Population: 1,178,681

Number of K-12 Schools: 780

Number of K-12 Students: 186,084

Number of K-12 E-Learning Programs: 36

Number of K-12 E-Learning Students: 19,142

### **e-Learning Updates**

There have been no regulatory changes in the province of Saskatchewan. There were currently 18 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 2021-22 school year, there were 19,142 unique students in Prekindergarten to Grade 12. Finally, the Ministry does not monitor blended learning activity.

### **Remote Learning**

#### *Fall 2021 Reopening*

Schools across Saskatchewan returned to in-person learning for the 2021-22 school year with a curricular focus on learning loss. Students who did not return to in-person learning were able to attend Saskatchewan's *Flex Ed* online virtual school [or one of the other online learning programs. Similar to these other programs,] the *Flex Ed* program was in place in the province before the pandemic and is funded by the government. All sports, extra-curricular activities, drama, and music continued but mandatory masking was required in all indoor spaces, including schools. Provincial exams were made optional for this school year (LaBonte et al., 2021).

#### *2021-22 School Year*

As the new school year progressed, schools remained open to in-person learning with local closures for COVID outbreaks. Interestingly, the government announced November 22, 2021 amendments to its Education Act “introducing legislation to protect teachers, staff and students

while accessing schools... to ensure families can access schools harassment free while vaccines are rolled out for kids 5-11.” With the increasing spread of the Omicron variant across Canada and the province, no separate measures were made regarding school reopening in January as in other provinces and in-person returned as planned. February saw the gradual release of community restrictions across Canada and the Saskatchewan government released the requirement for mandatory masking indoors on February 28, 2022 just after the proof of vaccination requirement expired February 14 (LaBonte et al., 2022).

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

### **Saskatoon Catholic Cyber Hybrid Courses**

In 2021 the school division’s technology team developed a script for their learning management system (Moodle) to create hybrids of all Cyber School online courses for use by classroom teachers and offered it for use in other school divisions and First Nations groups. When classrooms were forced to online learning because of COVID protocols, students could log in from home along with their teachers, and the continuity of the lessons were intact and when students were allowed to return to the school building, they could transition back to in-person learning having the online course available again within the classroom environment. Teachers were able to develop their computer literacy skills in ways that would have taken years of professional development to achieve while the experience also provided them with insight into distance learning and began to incorporate more of the online course materials into their everyday classroom practice.



### **Alberta (AB)**

Population: 4,436,258

Number of K-12 Schools: 2,518

Number of K-12 Students: 733,599

Number of K-12 Distance Learning Programs: 46

Number of K-12 Distance Learning Students: ~92,000

### **e-Learning Updates**

There were a number of changes to the funding of distance education by Alberta Education. Some revisions were made to the weighted moving average formula that was used to fund students from within the school authority enrolled in an online learning program. Additionally, there was a new formula introduced to provide for the funding of students from outside the school authority enrolled in an online learning program. Finally, Alberta Education provided a

competitive grant program that was designed to encourage school authorities to build capacity to serve students from outside of their geographic boundaries.

At present, Alberta Education lists 46 different distance and/or online learning programs as a part of their website directory. As of December 2022, Alberta Education had not provided any enrollment information. While researchers were able to compare data from the 2020-21 and 2021-22 school years using the “School and Authority Student Population Data,” we were only able to identify 25 of the 46 programs. A comparison of that data suggests that the 2021-22 distance and online learning enrollment was approximately 95% of the 2020-21 enrollment. As such, it is estimated that there were approximately 92,000 students enrolled in K-12 distance and/or online learning courses during the 2021-22 school year

## **Remote Learning**

### *Fall 2021 Reopening*

Alberta public and Catholic schools returned to in-person learning for the 2021-22 school year with masking and physical distancing not required in schools. Should the need to return to remote learning arise, the decision would be made by individual school authorities (with the approval from the Ministry of Education for short-term shifts or entire schools). However, as COVID-19 numbers began to rise at the end of the summer some school boards, such as Edmonton Public Schools and Edmonton Catholic Schools, offered online learning as an option. Similarly, Calgary offered online learning through their online school CBe-learn. Alberta Education also made its online learning directory, established before the pandemic, available to parents. The hourly requirements for remote learning, when schools needed to pivot to online learning, were discretionary in grades K-6 and equivalent school hours for grades 7-12. All student assessments and standardized testing resumed as normal, except for grade three testing, which was an optional for school authorities. In case of a return to remote learning, these tests could be cancelled at the discretion of school authorities. School authorities also had the option of continuing with extra-curricular activities (LaBonte et al., 2021).

### *2021-22 School Year*

As the new school year progressed, local school closures for COVID outbreaks continued with students shifting to remote learning. With the increasing spread of the Delta variant of COVID-19, on September 15 the Alberta government announced a mask requirement for all school staff and for students on buses and while in school, but not while in class, along with recommendations that students in K-6 remain in cohorts where possible. Schools continued to be open to in-person learning and public reporting of school outbreaks resumed October 6 with over 50 schools reporting outbreaks and 700 on alert due to clusters of infection. Prior to the return to school from December holidays, due to increasing community spread of the Omicron variant, school reopening was delayed one week until January 10, 2022 to allow time for delivery of rapid test kits and quality medical masks. Throughout the month of January, many schools were closed to in-person learning with students returning to remote learning due to outbreaks. February saw the gradual release of community restrictions across Canada and the Alberta



government gradual release included lifting of mask requirements in schools on February 14 and all other restrictions were lifted on June 14 (LaBonte et al., 2022).

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

### **Alberta Funding Model for Online Learning**

Funding is a core requirement for schools, both traditional and online and new funding structures came into place just before the pandemic. In Alberta, online high schools are funded differently than traditional high schools, which are "block funded" for each student in the school as of the end of September. For online schools, students need to be registered and working before the end of September but are then funded either based on the expected credits completed for students registered exclusively with an online school (a "Primary" registration) or on a block grant for a student attending another school regularly (a "Non-Primary" registration). The Non-Primary registration is only granted to one online school of possibly multiple and is based on which offers the greater number of credits. The impact on an online school results in an increase in academic planning to review all registrations a student might have and for how many credits as those with a greater number of credits from another online school (that would receive the funding) would have to be declined as no additional funding would be available. Prior to this, both online and traditional school settings were predominantly funded based on credit completion with a smaller operational block funding for a student's Primary school registration. This new approach has both benefits and drawbacks for the school, with some level of predictability in funding but a much more complex and time-consuming approach to the registration process.



### **British Columbia (BC)**

Population: 5,214,805

Number of K-12 Schools: 1,945

Number of K-12 Students: ~667,000

Number of K-12 Distance Learning Programs: 71

Number of K-12 Distance Learning Students: 73,744

### **e-Learning Updates**

The transformation of online learning delivery in B.C.'s K-12 sector has been underway since 2018. The full enactment of Bill 8 or the *Education Statutes Amendment Act, 2020* occurred on July 1, 2021, when the former distributed learning policies were replaced by interim online

learning policies that will remain in effect until June 30, 2023 (Government of British Columbia, 2020). The 68 online learning schools that held Minister's Agreements under the distributed learning policy were issued interim Agreements for the 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years. These schools could continue to cross enroll and/or register out of district students (while also serving local, in-District students) until April 30, 2023. In 2021-22, three public online learning schools closed, and three new District Online Learning Schools (DOLS) were established. These new schools did not require Minister's Agreements.

In 2021-22, there were 21 public online learning schools operated by 18 boards and 16 independent online learning schools operated by 16 authorities selected to become Provincial Online Learning Schools. The Ministry continues to work with sector partners and Indigenous Rightsholders to develop a single, comprehensive online learning policy and procedures guide, a governance framework for provincial online learning schools, and an accountability and quality assurance framework and process for online learning.

In 2021-22 there were a total of 71 online learning schools comprised of 55 district-level public online learning schools and 16 independent online learning schools that enrolled 73,744 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**

### *Fall 2021 Reopening*

Schools in British Columbia went back in-person for the 2021-22 school year. This plan did not include cohort learning groups or physical distancing, but did include mandatory masking. A distance learning model (or homeschooling option), either through the public school districts or independent online schools, was available to students who chose to stay home. However, these students would no longer be affiliated with their neighbourhood school. Students in grades 8-12 could still enroll in a school for in-person learning while taking some distance courses. Any actions due to health orders that might affect schools or school districts was left to the individual schools and districts, in conjunction with health officials, to implement any further health and safety restrictions (e.g., a return to remote learning). School programs (e.g., music and physical education, assemblies, and sports) continued with extra health and safety precautions (LaBonte et al., 2021).

### *2021-22 School Year*

As the new school year progressed, school closures for COVID outbreaks continued and the province maintained its mask mandate for all indoor spaces for grade 4-12 students, later expanded to grades 1-3 October 4. The province relaxed capacity limits in most regions other than those with low vaccination and higher transmission rates. Schools remained open to in-person learning until the return to school from December holidays when, due to increasing community spread of the Omicron variant of COVID-19, school reopening was delayed until

January 10, 2022, however schools were open January 4 as planned for children of essential workers and children with special needs. Schools used the time to implement enhanced safety plans and prepare for a possible return to remote learning given the community spread of the virus and potential staff shortages. February saw the gradual release of community restrictions across Canada and the BC government allowed the resumption of sport tournaments for children and youth while beginning the distribution of rapid antigen test kits on February 1. The mask requirement for everyone, including school students and staff, was relaxed on March 11 (LaBonte et al., 2022).

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

### **Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique's Blended Learning Model**

Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique (CSF), British Columbia's province-wide francophone school district, implemented an À la carte blended model using their école Virtuelle online courses and now offers a full K-12 program completely in French to over 200 students across BC and Yukon using a blended learning model. Students in physical schools have blocks in their schedule allocated to their online courses where they go to a dedicated space to work where an Education Assistant supports students taking online courses. The main benefits to students is the increased number of courses in French and the flexibility to start and complete courses anytime during the school year, working at their own pace. Although the blended model is still in its infancy, it is expected to deliver tremendous benefits to the community as students continue their schooling in French and are therefore more likely to contribute to reinforcing BC's Francophonie and to attend post-secondary institutions in French.



### **Yukon (YT)**

Population: 35,874

Number of K-12 Schools: 33

Number of K-12 Students: 5,456

Number of K-12 Distance Learning Programs: 2

Number of K-12 Distance Learning Students: ~250

### **e-Learning Updates**

There have been no regulatory changes in the Yukon territory. During the 2021-22 school year, the territory's only English-language online program – the Aurora Virtual School – enrolled a

total of 220 students in its various programs, while the territory's only French-language online program – *École Nomade* – enrolled 14 students. Additionally, there were another 10 students enrolled in courses offered by online schools in British Columbia and Ontario.

## **Remote Learning**

### *Fall 2021 Reopening*

Schools opened to in-person learning for the 2021-22 school year with no mandatory physical distancing requirements but mandatory masking for students on buses and outside of classrooms. Even though students were in school full-time, a technology-enabled blended learning approach was adopted. This choice of mode was put in place so that teachers could combine in-person instruction with digitally managed instruction. With a bring your own device (BYOD) policy, if students needed a digital device school administrators were asked to loan the needed technology or find alternative solutions for students without internet connectivity. If caregivers chose not to have their child attend in-person learning, they also had the opportunity to enroll their child in the Aurora Virtual School or home education. To assist with a teaching focus of a 'trauma-informed leadership lens' for working with students and their 'recovery learning', a website was offered as a source for professional learning for teachers, which included pre-recorded videos (e.g., how to use assistive technology) (LaBonte et al., 2021).

### *2021-22 School Year*

As the new school year progressed, school closures for COVID outbreaks began with affected staff and students required to self-isolate at home and a mandatory mask requirement was reinstated November 13. Schools remained open to in-person learning and the planned return to school after December holidays on January 4, 2022 was not altered as in other jurisdictions. However, due to increasing community spread of the Omicron variant of COVID-19, new public health measures came into effect January 7, 2022 limiting personal gatherings, indoor and outdoor, a limit of 25 for recreational team sports practice with no games or travel allowed. The Yukon government began distributing rapid tests to schools and communities January 21. February saw the gradual release of community restrictions across Canada and the government increased capacities for indoor team sports for youth age 18 or under to 25 or fifty percent, whichever was less, February 5, later (February 11) for adults. However, mandatory masking remained in place in indoor and outdoor settings where physical distancing was not possible and limits on gatherings continued. Effective March 4 only the mandatory masking requirement remained in effect which was later lifted on March 18 (LaBonte et al., 2022).

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

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## **Northwest Territories (NT)**

Population: 44,826

Number of K-12 Schools: 49

Number of K-12 Students: 8,700

Number of K-12 Distance Learning Programs: 1

Number of K-12 Distance Learning Students: 120

## **e-Learning Updates**

There have been no regulatory changes in the Northwest Territories. During the 2021-22 school year 60 students were enrolled in Northern Distance Learning. Additionally, there were approximately 124 students enrolled in distance learning courses offered through the Vista Virtual School in Alberta (which replaced the Alberta Distance Learning Centre as the non-territorial provider). The Department of Education, Culture and Employment does not formally track blended learning.

## **Remote Learning Summary**

### *Fall 2021 Reopening*

Schools opened for in-person learning for the 2021-22 school year with masks required on school buses and no drama, music, physical education programs, high contact extra-curricular activities, or school assemblies. Only students with medical exemptions continued with remote learning. Safety measures, such as physical distancing remained in place for Kindergarten to grade 6, with cohort ‘bubbles’ and outdoor learning as much as possible (i.e., no indoor activities such as choir, drama, assemblies, or sports continued). Any student that needed to self-isolate or was sick with COVID-19 returned to remote learning, while healthy students who did not want to attend in-person learning had to follow the Home Schooling Regulations. All student assessments returned to normal pre-pandemic practices (LaBonte et al., 2021).

### *2021-22 School Year*

As the new school year progressed, and community spread of the virus increased causing school closures, the Department of Education launched a COVID-19 at-home screening program, conducting random sampling of 10% of classroom students. Schools remained open to in-person learning and, unlike in most provinces, school reopening in January after December holidays continued as planned. However, due to rapid community spread of the Omicron variant, on January 6 a public health advisory was issued urging schools to return to remote learning for two weeks and school closures caused many students to return to remote learning. The Government of the Northwest Territories began to ease restrictions March 1 beginning with the release of self-isolation requirements after travel and finally ending all restrictions April 1 (LaBonte et al., 2022).

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



## **Nunavut (NV)**

Population: 39,407

Number of K-12 Schools: 45

Number of K-12 Students: 10,902

Number of K-12 E-Learning Programs: 0

Number of K-12 Distance Learning Students: Unknown

### **e-Learning Updates**

There were no changes in the regulatory framework for Nunavut. As the Department of Education failed to provide an update for 2021-22, the level of K-12 distance, online, and blended learning in the territory is unknown.

### **Remote Learning**

#### *Fall 2021 Reopening*

All students in Nunavut returned to in-person learning for the 2021-22 school year, with land-based learning and outdoor education continuing. The focus for the beginning of the year was on ‘recovery learning’ as a transition for curriculum and achievement as well as mental health and well-being. Should a return to remote learning occur, schools used *Edsby* as their online platform. Daily learning would be adjusted to age and grade level and accommodations for the diverse needs of students. A blended model of learning could also be put in place where students were in-school 50% of the time and then in online cohorts. Devices would be delivered to students in need as well as learning packages and supplies to support remote learning. Finally, assessments and reporting also continued (LaBonte et al., 2021).

#### *2021-22 School Year*

Schools remained open to in-person learning until the return to school from December holidays when, due to increasing community spread of the Omicron variant of COVID-19, school reopening was delayed until January 17, 2022 with a return to remote learning. School safety plans were put in place for student return to in-person learning January 24 at either 100 percent or 50 percent capacity depending on the COVID-19 situation (e.g., schools in Iqaluit, Kinngait, Arviat, Rankin Inlet, and Cambridge Bay opened at 50 per cent capacity) (Nunavut Department of Education, 2022). Masks were required on school buses and in schools until April 11 when the government lifted all mandatory restrictions other than masking restrictions at government workplaces and health facilities.

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

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## Federal

Population: 1,008,955<sup>1</sup>

Number of K-12 Schools: 502<sup>2</sup>

Number of K-12 Students: 109,001<sup>2</sup>

Number of K-12 Distance Learning Programs: 4

Number of K-12 Distance Learning Students: 3,500

<sup>1</sup>2016 Census data

<sup>2</sup>refers to those reporting a 2021-22 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 2021-22 school year.

At present, four Indigenous e-learning programs have been identified. Based on the most recent data submitted by these programs to the Individual Program Survey, it is estimated that there were approximately 3,500 students engaged in distance and online learning during the 2021-22 school year. Given ISC no longer provides data on blended learning indicators, there is no estimate of the approximate number of students engaged in blended learning.

## Remote Learning

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*. The Federal Government also outlined considerations for reducing risk through the use of cafeterias and libraries, as well as specific school activities such as music and physical education. The use of masks for risk reduction was encouraged, specifically 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 (LaBonte et al., 2022).

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



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## Call for Sponsors – 2023 State of the Nation: K-12 E-Learning in Canada Study

The 2023 version of the *State of the Nation Study: K-12 E-Learning in Canada* study will represent the sixteen 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 2023 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](mailto: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 sixteen 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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