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## State of the Nation: K-12 E-Learning in Canada

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# State of the Nation: K-12 E-Learning in Canada

2015 Abbreviated Edition

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First Nations Education  
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Michael K. Barbour

Founding Researcher, State of the Nation Report

# Foreword

It is my pleasure to write the forward to this eighth edition of the *State of the Nation: K-12 E-Learning in Canada* report on behalf of the Canadian eLearning Network (CANeLearn). This year's report provides an update on the 2014 data and abbreviated printed publication. It is intended to keep the data published on our website accurate and timely (<http://canelearn.net>). We look forward to the return of brief issue papers, vignettes, and expanded information about innovation and new approaches emerging in online and blended practices in K-12 programs across Canada.

The *State of the Nation: K-12 E-Learning in Canada* report continues to be Canada's unique benchmark for the expanding use of technology-supported blended and online learning in Canada. CANeLearn has become the key sponsor for this report and will continue to do so into the future. This past academic year has shown a continued expansion of technology-supported education in online programs, sustained and rapid growth in the use of digital and online learning environments as an expansion of the traditional school classroom. These blended learning programs and environments (a varied mix of classroom and online methodologies where students have some control over their own learning) are increasing access, flexibility and access to learning for students.

In the online learning programs, many have increased student engagement and course completion, placing them on a par with traditional school results. In some cases, students who are taking at least one or more of their high school courses online have a higher graduation rate than those that do not. Canada continues to have the highest per capita student enrolment in online courses and programs of any jurisdiction in the world. In addition, many jurisdictions are exploring how to leverage open education practices, including the use and creation of open education resources (OER) and Creative Commons licensing, to expand support and sharing to improve students' success.

The *State of the Nation: K-12 E-Learning in Canada* report, and its publication on our 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. This report provides a benchmark for educators as it offers background, guidance and ideas for the improvement of policy and practice in online and blended learning. CANeLearn is a proud supporter and partner of this research, its publication and dissemination.

Michael Canuel

Chair, Canadian eLearning Network

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# Executive Summary

Current research in K-12 online learning in Canada has focused on defining distance learning and its current strengths and weaknesses. Yet, the proliferation of technologies and digital learning spaces has led to the emergence of new instructional strategies and digital learning practices for teachers in many K-12 classrooms, both online and onsite. Traditional school-based classrooms are incorporating technology-supported open learning options, creating “blended learning” opportunities where at least part of instruction occurs in a classroom, part online at a distance to the teacher, both combined with some element of choice in learning for students. For these emerging practices little is known empirically, only anecdotally, as research into these practices has been limited or nonexistent, particularly in Canada.

As you will find in this publication, many provinces and territories in Canada have some reference to distance education in their Education Act or Schools Act, the reference is typically used to describe distance education or to enable the Ministry of Education to create, approve or regulate K-12 distance education. However, few provinces and territories have any regulations describing online or blended learning. Two exceptions may be Nova Scotia and British Columbia. In Nova Scotia distance education is described in the collective agreement signed between the Government of Nova Scotia and the Nova Scotia Teachers Union. British Columbia has the highest level of regulation for K–12 online learning, featuring a structured system that allows students to freely choose any online course or program, and a funding model where dollars follow student choice. BC also has defined and published standards and a focus on quality for their online learning programs.

As digital learning practices expand, there is a clear need for further research and study in the emerging field of K-12 online and blended learning. Canada, as the second largest country in the world, has a rich history of technology-supported distance learning strategies to bridge the country’s geographic expanse. Yet, for the past decade Canadian educators actively embracing new learning models and technologies have worked in relative isolation, sharing only locally at best. Given our rich experience in online and distance learning, an investment in Canadian-based research would be wise, and a national research model founded on the *State of the Nation: K-12 E-Learning in Canada* report could foster, support, communicate and share research in a manner that reaches local practitioners, not just academic journals.

This eighth edition of the *State of the Nation: K-12 E-Learning in Canada* report, combined with the consolidation of Canadian research posted on the Canadian eLearning Network’s (CANeLearn) website (see <http://canelearn.net/state-of-the-nation-k-12-online-learning-in-canada/>), lays the foundation for an expansion of critical research for Canadian K-12 practitioners of K-12 online and blended learning practice and innovation. The 2015 report is a call for an expansion of research from Canada, including written publications covering topics specific to blended and online learning, vignettes, features and expanded information and stories about innovation and new approaches across Canada. CANeLearn looks forward to continuing to take a lead role in supporting and partnering in this research, posting this information on its website, and sharing it with members and educators across Canada and beyond.

# 1. Introduction

This is the eighth annual *State of the Nation: K-12 E-Learning in Canada* report. Unlike previous editions of this report – which were sub-titled “K-12 Online Learning in Canada,” this is the second time that this study has been published by the Canadian eLearning Network (CANeLearn). Given this new partnership between the *State of the Nation: K-12 E-Learning in Canada* study and CANeLearn, a not-for-profit society with a mission to provide leadership that champions student success in online and blended learning, the authors felt that a change in the name of the annual report was appropriate.

The new name is not simply a different way to tell the same story, but reflects recent developments and growing diversity in the field of K-12 e-learning in Canada. The field remains a loosely defined form of educational delivery that encompasses varying levels of technology. At the K-12 level this is operationalized in more traditional forms of distance education to online distance education to a varying of blended learning models.

The 2015 *State of the Nation: K-12 E-Learning in Canada* report is an abbreviated study that examines the nature of the governance and level of activity of K-12 distance, online and blended education in each province and territory, as well as for First Nations, Metis and Inuit. Like the previous report, it does not include the description of national trends in K-12 distance, online and blended learning; additional vignettes to illustrate a variety of those individuals and programs providing those learning opportunities; brief issues related to the provision of K-12 distance, online and blended education in Canada; or the coast to coast-to-coast survey of each of the K-12 distance, online and blended education programs across the country. These features have been involved in the online repository for the *State of the Nation: K-12 E-Learning in Canada* study, which is available at:

<http://canelearn.net/state-of-the-nation-k-12-online-learning-in-canada/>

This pattern will continue into the future, with the annual printed report containing a focus on simply updating the level of activity and nature of regulation in each of the jurisdictions, and the online repository including brief issue papers, vignettes, and the national individual programs survey.

## 1.1 Methodology

The methodology utilized for the 2015 study included:

- A survey that was sent to each of the Ministries of Education (see Appendix A for a copy of this survey);
- 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.

During that data collection process, officials from the Ministries of Education in all thirteen provinces and territories responded. The profiles were constructed based on these survey responses, along with information provided by key stakeholders involved in K-12 distance education in each respective province or territory, and in some instances an analysis of available documents. Table 1 indicates the history of data collection for the *State of the Nation: K-12 E-Learning in Canada* study.

**Table 1. Data collection sources for the *State of the Nation: K-12 E-Learning in Canada* over the past six years**

Jurisdiction	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
NL	KS / DA	MoE / DA	DA	MoE	DA	MoE / DA	MoE / DA	MOE
NS	DA	MoE / DA	MoE / DA	MoE / DA	MoE / DA	MoE	MoE	MOE
PE	DA	KS / DA	MoE	MoE	MoE	MoE	MoE	MOE
NB	DA	MoE / DA	MoE	MoE / DA	MoE	MoE	MoE	MOE
QC	KS	KS / DA	MoE / KS	MoE / KS	MoE / KS	MoE / KS	MoE	MOE
ON	KS / DA	KS / DA	KS / DA	MoE / DA	MoE / DA	MoE / KS	MoE / KS	KS / DA
MB	KS	MoE / DA	MoE	MoE	MoE	MoE	MoE	MOE
SK	KS / DA	MoE	MoE	MoE / KS	MoE / KS	MoE / KS	MoE	MOE
AB	DA	KS / DA	KS / DA	MoE	MoE / DA	MoE / DA	MoE / KS	MOE
BC	MoE / DA	MoE / DA	MoE	MoE	MoE	MoE	MoE	MOE
YT	DA	KS / DA	MoE / DA	MoE	MoE	MoE	MoE	MOE
NT	DA	MoE / DA	DA	MoE	MoE	MoE	MoE	MOE
NU	DA	MoE	MoE	MoE	MoE	MoE	MoE / KS	MOE / KS
Federal	-	-	-	-	-	AANDC / KS / DA	AANDC / KS	INAC / KS

MoE – Ministry of Education, KS – Key stakeholders, DA – Document analysis, AANDC – Aboriginal Affairs & Northern Development Canada/INAC – Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada

Prior to publication drafts of each profile were provided to the Ministries along with any key stakeholders that provided information for the profile. These individuals were given the opportunity to suggest revisions, most of which were accepted by the author (and all of which were seriously considered).



## 1.2 How to Read This Document

The goal of the *2015 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 education, as well as blended learning that may occur within the context of a face-to-face setting. As this focus on e-learning is new to the *2015 State of the Nation: K-12 E-Learning in Canada* report, with previous reports focusing on K-12 online learning in Canada, the report begins with a brief issue paper that examines the nature, development, and nomenclature in the field. This brief issue paper is followed by a national overview of K-12 distance education in Canada and a discussion of the nature of regulation and level of activity in each provincial, territorial, and federal jurisdiction. Each profile includes:

- a description of the K-12 e-learning programs and their level of activity, and
- the nature of regulation (with a focus on any updates from the 2014 report).

Finally, the report concludes with any references that are used, a copy of the ministerial and individual program surveys, and a call for sponsors for the *2016 State of the Nation: K-12 E-Learning in Canada* study.

In addition to the written report, the *2015 State of the Nation: K-12 E-Learning in Canada* report includes a supporting website that is available at:

*<http://canelearn.net/state-of-the-nation-k-12-online-learning-in-canada/>*

The website is designed to provide a more developed version of the profiles for each of the provinces, territories, and federal jurisdictions. These profiles include:

- a description of the K-12 e-learning programs and their level of activity;
- the nature of regulation (i.e., a more overall perspective, as opposed to an annual updating of material);
- a discussion of how jurisdictions treat inter-provincial and international distance education;
- a history of K-12 distance education (to be added throughout 2015-16);
- the most recent responses to the individual program survey (see Appendix B for a copy of this survey);
- a variety of vignettes related to that jurisdiction; and
- any brief issue papers that have been produced specific to that jurisdiction.

It is our goal that, beginning with the *2016 State of the Nation: K-12 E-Learning in Canada* report, each annual published report will become an abbreviated update of 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* report will continue to be a comprehensive resource for e-learning in each jurisdiction.

## 2. Defining E-Learning in Canada

The annual study of K-12 distance education in Canada – or the annual *State of the Nation: K-12 Online Learning in Canada* report – began in 2008 with the aim of providing needed exposure to the proliferation and developments in K-12 distance learning in Canada. In that first report, the authors noted that “to date, most of what [was] known about K-12 online learning from the media and literature [was] focused upon experiences in the United States. However, virtual schooling first began in Canada...” (Barbour & Stewart, 2008, p. 4). Even from this initial background, an astute reader will note the use – and potential confounding – of the terms K-12 distance education, K-12 online learning, and virtual schooling.

Over the past seven editions of the *State of the Nation: K-12 Online Learning in Canada* report, the authors have used the term “K-12 online learning” in the title. However, the report itself has provided information on all forms of K-12 distance education – including correspondence, audiographics/telematics, videoconferencing, and online learning (which has also been referred to as virtual schooling and cyber schooling at times). In recent years, the authors have also referenced blended learning activity in various jurisdictions.

The purpose of this brief issue paper is to begin to clarify the focus and intent of this annual study. This paper begins with a historical discussion of how K-12 online learning has been defined in early national and international surveys. Next, this paper describes the introduction of blended learning to these national surveys of K-12 online and blended learning. Finally, this paper defines the term K-12 e-learning, and outlines the rationale and description for its use for the annual *State of the Nation: K-12 E-Learning in Canada* study.

### Defining K-12 Online Learning

In his landmark study – as a part of his *Virtual High Schools: State of the States* report – Tom Clark (2000) wrote that:

*A “virtual high school” is here defined as “a state approved and/or regionally accredited school offering secondary courses through distance learning methods that include Internet-based delivery.” Distance education might be formally defined as “formal education in which a majority of instruction occurs while teacher and learner are separate” (Verduin & Clark, 1991). Distance education or distance learning use delivery methods that include independent study, also known as correspondence study or study by mail, as well as videoconferencing, Internet, and computer-assisted instruction, and other instructional technologies. These days, most writers are thinking only of the electronic delivery methods when they use the word “distance.” “Virtual” began as a term for computer-based simulated real-time environments, such as “virtual reality.” A few years ago, “virtual*

*learning” was used synonymously with “distance learning” to describe instruction delivered remotely via technology, but now it is increasingly used to refer to Internet-based learning. (pp. 1-2)*

A year later, in his *Virtual schools: Trends and Issues* report, Clark (2001) used the same definition to describe the phenomenon that would become K-12 online learning in the United States: “a state approved and/or regionally accredited school offering secondary courses through distance learning methods that include Internet-based delivery” (p. 1).

With support provided by Learning Point Associates, along with the Colorado Department of Education, Illinois Virtual High School, and Wisconsin Virtual School, Watson, Winograd, and Kalmon (2004) published the first *Keeping Pace with K–12 Online Learning: A Snapshot of State-Level Policy and Practice* report. The study was designed to answer two research questions:

1. What online learning activity is occurring at the K–12 level within the state?
2. What state-level policies and other guidance are being developed in order to monitor or regulate the development of online learning programs?

For the purposes of this study, online learning programs were defined as:

*An educational organization that develops and offers online instruction and content. An online learning program may be a cyberschool, or it may provide supplementary learning opportunities for students enrolled in physical schools or cyberschools. (pp. 10-11)*

This initial study was an abbreviated national study, which focused only on 22 different states. The following year, Learning Point Associates published a complete national *Keeping Pace with K–12 Online Learning: A Snapshot of State-Level Policy and Practice* report, where Watson and Kalmon (2005) used the same definition for online learning program.

Watson and Ryan (2006), which was the first year the North American Council of Online Learning (NACOL) – later the International Association of K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL) – was involved with the *Keeping Pace with K–12 Online Learning: A Snapshot of State-Level Policy and Practice* report, defined online learning as “education in which instruction and content are delivered primarily via the Internet. Online learning is a form of distance learning” (p. 134). Further, they defined virtual schools and cyber schools as “an online learning program in which students enroll and earn credit towards academic advancement (or graduation) based on successful completion of the courses (or other designated learning opportunities) provided by the school” (p. 134).

That same year, NACOL conducted their first international study, *International Perspective of K-12 Online Learning*, where they described K-12 online learning as including:

*A range of web-based resources, media, tools, interactivity, and curricular or instructional approaches. Internationally, a variety of terms are used to describe online learning – including distance education, virtual schools, virtual learning, e-learning, electronic learning. In general, the*

*common theme is that this type of learning takes place over the Internet. (Powell & Patrick, 2006, p. 3)*

This definition broadened the scope of K-12 online learning to include many different forms of K-12 distance education – including more traditional delivery mediums (e.g., correspondence, audiographics/telematics, videoconferencing, etc.).

It was in this environment that the first *State of the Nation: K-12 Online Learning in Canada* report was published by NACOL. Barbour and Stewart (2008) described the report as the Canadian version of the annual *Keeping Pace with K–12 Online Learning: A Snapshot of State-Level Policy and Practice* reports. Further, the authors indicated that they were utilizing the definitions outlined in the *Virtual Schooling Glossary and Definitions* project (see <http://virtuelschool.wikispaces.com/glossary>), which used the Clark (2001) definition for virtual schooling and the Watson and Kalmon (2005) online learning. However, in the actual report the authors provided information on the state of K-12 distance education in a more broadly defined manner, consistent with the description of K-12 online learning provided by Powell and Patrick (2006).

## Defining K-12 Online and Blended Learning

In 2012, Watson, Murin, Vashaw, Gemin, and Rapp (2012) updated the name of their annual study to be the *Keeping Pace with K–12 Online and Blended Learning: A Snapshot of State-Level Policy and Practice* report (emphasis added). At this stage in their annual study, the authors were using the following definitions:

**Online learning** is teacher-led education that takes place over the Internet, with the teacher and student separated geographically, using a web-based educational delivery system that includes software to provide a structured learning environment. It may be synchronous (communication in which participants interact in real time, such as online video) or asynchronous (communication separated by time, such as email or online discussion forums). It may be accessed from multiple settings (in school and/or out of school buildings).

**Supplemental online programs** provide a small number of courses to students who are enrolled in a school separate from the online program.

**Fully online schools**, also called cyberschools, work with students who are enrolled primarily (often only) in the online school. Cyberschools typically are responsible for their students' scores on state assessments. In some states, most full-time online schools are charter schools.

For **blended learning**, we are using the Innosight Institute definition: "A formal education program in which a student learns at least in part through online delivery of content and instruction with some element of student control over time, place, path, and/or pace, and at

least in part at a supervised brick-and-mortar location away from home.” (emphasis in original, p. 7)

Part of the rationale for this expansion to include both online **and** blended learning was that “as online learning evolves into new models that include blended learning, personalized instruction, portable and mobile learning, and computer-based instruction (CBI), other defining dimensions come into play as well.” (p. 9)

At the same time, Barbour (2012) reported in the *State of the Nation: K-12 Online Learning in Canada* that:

*Even though it isn't necessarily seen as a part of or an extension to K-12 online learning, blended learning is often advanced through K-12 online learning initiatives. For example, in Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick and Ontario the asynchronous course content developed for their online learning programs has been made available to classroom teachers to use with their own students. In Ontario, 2011-12 was the first year classroom teachers have been able to use the asynchronous course content in the provincial learning management system. As such, the level of activity these classroom users represented is still unknown. However, in New Brunswick more than a third of the enrollments in the provincial learning management system are from classroom teachers and students using the content in a blended fashion. Similarly, while the Learn program in Quebec serves approximately 5300 students engaged in its distance education programs, it has more than 150,000 enrollments from classroom teachers and students using asynchronous course content. Due to the fact that blended learning is generally not seen as part of K-12 distance education, the State of the Nation: K-12 Online Learning in Canada study has continued to exclude these numbers from the participation statistics. (p. 15)*

This represented a departure between the two national reports, with the American report combining K-12 online and blended learning and the Canadian report continuing to focus more on various forms of K-12 distance education. While blended learning was occurring across Canada, practitioners did not necessarily consider it part of the distance education or online learning movement. “Within the Canadian context blended learning is largely considered an extension of effective ICT, or effective technology integration” (p. 15). While the *State of the Nation: K-12 Online Learning in Canada* report since 2012 has not reported on K-12 blended learning participation, it has attempted to describe some of the activity that is occurring in various provinces and territories.

## Defining K-12 E-Learning

In 2014, Watson, Pape, Murin, Gemin, and Vashaw (2014) updated the title of their annual report to *Keeping Pace with K-12 Digital Learning: An Annual Review of Policy and Practice*. The authors outlined the rationale for this change as:

*Digital learning is replacing the previous reference to online and blended learning. This seemingly small word change signifies a significant evolution in the landscape, and a major change in the way we are analyzing and reporting on it... the broader digital learning landscape continues to shift in many ways, including the exploding growth of new digital learning technologies and products, the changing and merging ways these resources are used, and shifting levels of usage within the various sectors of the K–12 education industry. (p. 4)*

This new name represented the third change in title over the past four annual reports, which was also indicative of the changing nature of the field of K-12 online and blended learning.

2014 was also the same year that the Canadian eLearning Network (CANeLearn) began publishing the *State of the Nation: K-12 Online Learning in Canada* report. The mission of CANeLearn is to provide leadership that champions student success by supporting organizations and educators involved in online and blended learning through networking, collaboration, and research opportunities. With a focus on K-12 online and blended learning, CANeLearn’s vision of e-learning is consistent with the New Zealand Ministry of Education, which defined e-learning as “learning and teaching that is facilitated by or supported through the smart use of information and communication technologies” (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 2).

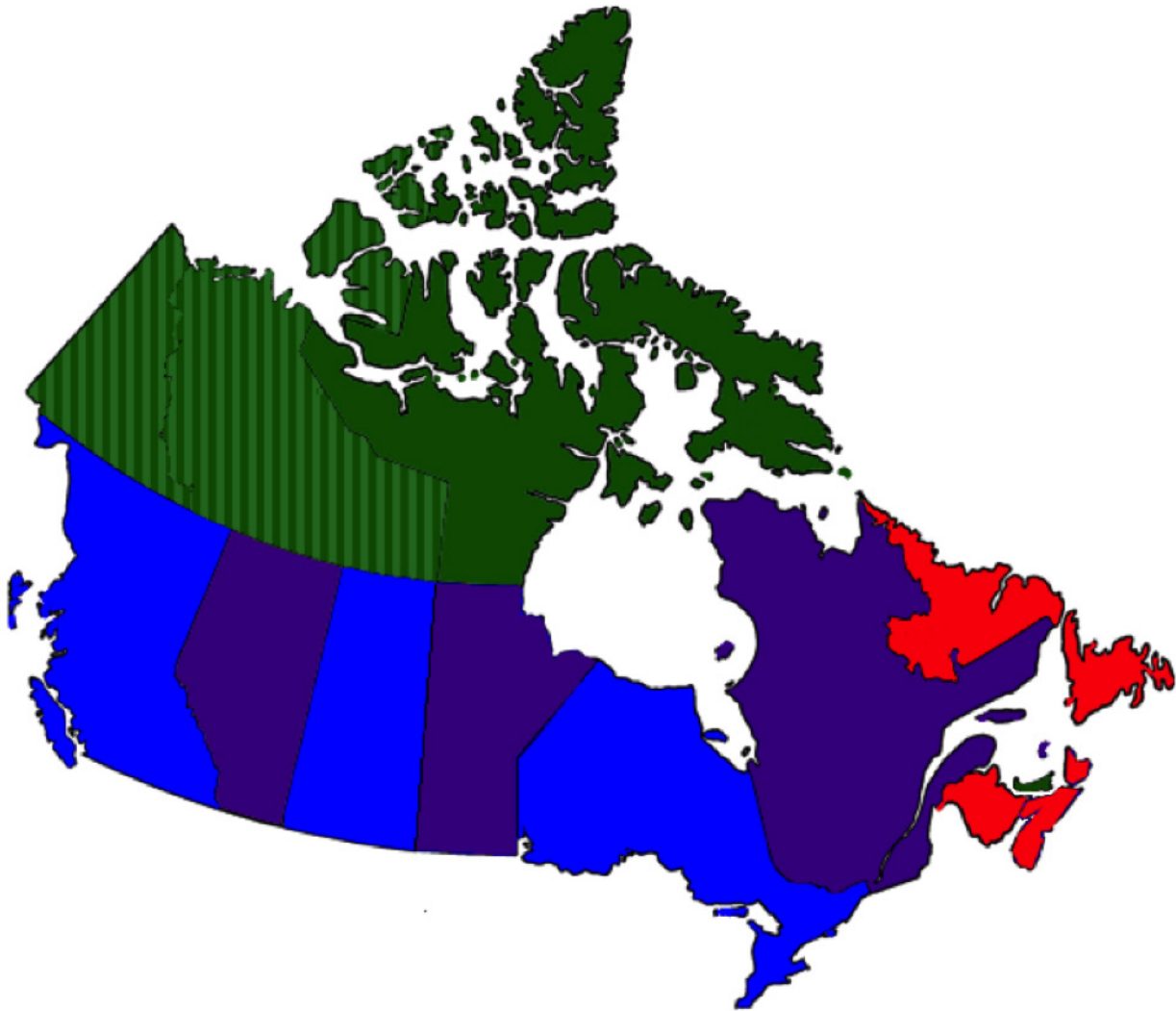
Beginning in 2015 the annual study of K-12 distance, online and blended learning policy and practice in Canada will be known as the *State of the Nation: K-12 E-Learning in Canada* report. The use of the term “e-learning” to describe distance, online and blended learning is consistent with the name and focus of its sponsor – CANeLearn. The term “e-learning” is also consistent with other Canadian organizations. For example, the Canadian Council for Learning (2009) defined e-learning as:

*The application of computer technologies to education. E-learning can take many forms, whether it is used face-to-face in classrooms, as a required part of classroom activities or course work (e.g., online discussions), or to deliver a course fully online. E-learning can include distance education as well as traditional in-class instruction. (Canadian Council for Learning, 2009, p. 4)*

This definition came from their *State of E-Learning in Canada* report, which focused on e-learning in the K-12, higher education, and corporate sectors in Canada.

For the purposes of the *State of the Nation: K-12 E-Learning in Canada* annual study, e-learning will be defined to include all forms of K-12 distance education (e.g., correspondence, audiographics/telematics, videoconferencing, and online learning), as well as identified instances of blended learning. This change will mean that even though many educators in Canada still consider blended learning a form of technology integration, the researchers for the *State of the Nation: K-12 E-Learning in Canada* report will attempt to identify and describe the level of activity and nature of regulation for blended learning in each province and territory.

### 3. National Overview



Single provincial program

Primarily district-based programs

Combination of provincial and district-based programs

Use online learning programs from other provinces



## Level of Activity

Students from all thirteen provinces and territories continue to participate in K-12 distance, online, and blended learning opportunities. This is not to say that all thirteen jurisdictions have individual programs in operation, as there are no programs in Prince Edward Island or Nunavut. The landscape of Canadian K-12 distance, online, and blended learning continues to change – but only in slight ways. The total K-12 population in Canada for 2014-15 was approximately 5.2 million students. Based on actual and estimated enrollment data, the number of students engaged in K-12 distance education was approximately 320,000.

*Table 2. Summary of the K-12 distance education regulation by jurisdiction for 2014-15*

Province/Territory	# of K-12 students	# enrolled in distance education	Percent involvement
NL	67,293	947	1.4%
NS	119,383	~2,300	1.9%
PE	20,131	44	<0.1%
NB	98,906	~2455	2.4%
QC	1,132,506	~43,736	3.9%
ON	2,003,253	~87,000	4.3%
MB	182,073	~9,500	5.2%
SK	175,202	~15,000	8.6%
AB	616,375	~75,000	11.4%
BC	633,428	78,499	12.4%
YT	5,122	421	8.2%
NT	8,204	150	1.8%
NU	9,728	96	1.0%
Federal	106,500	~2,000	1.9%
<i>Total</i>	<i>5,178,104</i>	<i>317,148</i>	<i>6.1%</i>

The highest level of activity in distance education by raw numbers is in Ontario (based on recent estimates), but by proportion of students involved British Columbia continues to lead the country. In both jurisdictions there are a substantial number of district-based public programs, along with a significant number of independent or private programs. Estimates also continue to indicate that Alberta also has a higher than average level of participation in K-12 distance education. It should be noted that the level of activity in both Ontario and Alberta are estimates, which were derived from extrapolating data received through the individual program survey (as well as comparing that data from previous years to determine if any or what level of growth has occurred). As such, these estimates



may be inaccurate without the collection of reliable data by the Ministry. Significant growth continues to be seen in the Yukon, which is likely due to the continued development of its own K-12 distance, online, and blended learning programs. Other jurisdictions remain relatively consistent with their level of participation.

It should be noted that 317,148 or 6.1% K-12 students enrolled in some form of distance education during the 2014-15 school year represents a slight decrease from the previous school year (i.e., 332,077 or 6.2% students). We do not believe that this slight decrease represents a slowing of the growth of distance education and e-learning. We believe that this slight decrease represents the variability in the accuracy of data collection by the individual provinces and territories, as well as by the researchers for this study. For example, if you compare the level of activity in Quebec from 2013-14 (i.e., ~70,500 students) to 2014-15 (i.e., ~43,736) (see Table 3 below). Both of these figures were approved by the *Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport* at the time. However, during the data collection phase for 2014-15 the *Ministère* indicated that the 2013-14 figure of ~70,500 represented the total number of enrollments, not the total number of students. This difference of 26,764 students represents more than the 14,929 student decrease in overall level of activity from 2013-14 to 2014-15.

**Table 3. Summary of the K-12 distance education regulation by jurisdiction for 2013-14 and 2014-15**

Province/Territory	2013-14		2014-15	
	# enrolled in distance education	Percent involvement	# enrolled in distance education	Percent involvement
NL	884	1.3%	947	1.4%
NS	~2,720	2.2%	~2,300	1.9%
PE	108	0.5%	44	<0.1%
NB	2615	2.6%	~2455	2.4%
QC	~70,500	5.4%	~43,736	3.9%
ON	78,095	3.9%	~87,000	4.3%
MB	~12,000	6.0%	~9,500	5.2%
SK	~10,000 <sup>1</sup>	5.8%	~15,000	8.6%
AB	~75,000	12.2%	~75,000	11.4%
BC	77,912	12.3%	78,499	12.4%
YT	182	3.5%	421	8.2%
NT	228	2.8%	150	1.8%
NU	33	<0.1%	96	1.0%
Federal	~1,800	0.1%	~2,000	1.9%
<i>Total</i>	<i>332,077</i>	<i>6.2%</i>	<i>317,148</i>	<i>6.1%</i>

Based on our data, we believe the use of K-12 distance, online and blended learning continues to increase in Canada (see Table 4).

**Table 4. K-12 distance education 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 <sup>1</sup>	5.4%
2014-15	317,148	6.1%

<sup>1</sup> Revised based on feedback from the *Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport*

As the data indicate, it is difficult to ascertain the exact level of growth. Note that the first two levels of activity surveys generated estimated totals and the third survey provided a range of totals. While the total from 2010-11 to the present have been provided as a specific figure, this data is no less an approximation than the earlier estimates.

The fact is that better data are needed. The number of jurisdictions that track and are only able to provide specific data concerning the level of activity of distance education and online learning continues to decrease.

Interestingly, one area where jurisdictions are beginning to track data at a higher rate is blended learning. Some jurisdictions have always been able to report some level of blended learning activity. For example, New Brunswick has always tracked the number of classroom-based student users in their learning management system that were accessing the Ministry's course content. Since the addition of a blended learning focus to their *Provincial e-Learning Strategy*, Ontario has been able to provide an approximate figure to represent the number of unique blended learning logins in their system. Within Quebec, the LEARN program has always tracked the number of students accessing their blended learning asynchronous services. However, this past year we have seen the addition of several jurisdictions beginning to track this information. For example, Nova Scotia has begun to provide the number of users for their *Google Apps for Education* and their blended learning platform. Similarly, the Yukon is now tracking and providing data on the students accessing both of the blended learning program options. The level of blended learning activity from just these five jurisdictions was approximately 361,517 students or 7.0% of the total K-12 student population in Canada, but 10.8% of the K-12 students in those five particular jurisdictions.

## Nature of Regulation

There has been little change in the nature of regulation governing K-12 distance education, online and blended learning over the past school year.

*Table 5. Summary of the K-12 distance education regulation by province and territory*

Province/Territory	Type of Regulation	Nature of Regulation
NL	None	
NS	Collective agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provisions related to workload, professional development and quality of life issues</li> </ul>
PE	Ministerial directive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Guidelines for the use of distance education</li> </ul>
NB	Policy handbook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outlines responsibilities for distance education stakeholders at all levels</li> </ul>
QC	None	
ON	Ministerial contracts and policy handbook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>District school boards agree to follow the policies outlined in the <i>Provincial E-Learning Strategy</i></li> </ul>
MB	Legislation and policy handbook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minister of Education can approve distance education</li> <li>Regulations are related to the use of the Ministry distance education options</li> </ul>
SK	None	
AB	Legislation and policy handbook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minister of Education can make regulations related to distance education</li> <li>Regulations primarily focus on amount of instructional time</li> </ul>
BC	Legislation and Ministerial contracts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Substantial regulations related to funding, quality and almost all other aspects of the delivery of distributed learning</li> </ul>
YT	Legislation and memorandums of understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minister of Education can approve distance education and charge student fees for such courses</li> <li>Individual agreements are between the territorial government and individual distance learning providers</li> </ul>
NT	Legislation, policy handbook and memorandums of understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allows education authorities to create or engage in distance education programs</li> <li>Provides series of requirements for distance education programs</li> <li>Individual agreements are between the territorial government and individual distance learning providers</li> </ul>
NU	Legislation and memorandums of understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Defines what constitutes distance education</li> <li>Individual agreements are between the territorial government and individual distance learning providers</li> </ul>
Federal	None	

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, online, and blended learning.

In many jurisdictions there exist no additional regulations beyond those contained in the *Education Act* or *Schools Act*. In jurisdictions where regulation does exist, one trend is the use of contracts or policy handbooks to regulate K-12 distance, online, and blended learning. In most instances these handbooks are in jurisdictions where schools participate in some form of province-wide program and the handbook outlines the requirements for participation in that program.

The two exceptions to these general trends continue to be Nova Scotia (e.g., collective agreement signed between the Government of Nova Scotia and the Nova Scotia Teachers Union) and British Columbia (e.g., section 3.1 and section 75 (4.1) of the *School Act*, 2006, as well as section 8.1 of the *Independent School Act*, 2006).

Finally, the main change in the nature of regulation of K-12 distance education was at the federal level. At present, Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) has no specific regulation related to K-12 distance education programs. In the past, INAC would enter into agreements with some of the individual First Nations, Metis, and Inuit distance learning programs. These direct service agreements ceased at the end of the 2014-15 school year.

## 3.1 Newfoundland and Labrador (NL)

*Population: 526,977*

*Number of K-12 Schools: 262*

*Number of K-12 Students: 67,293*

*Number of K-12 E-Learning Programs: 1*

*Number of K-12 E-Learning Students: 947*



### K-12 E-Learning Programs

The Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation (CDLI) is the sole provider of K-12 distance education in the province. During the 2014-15 school year there were 947 students registered and 1718 course registrations in 38 different courses representing 115 different schools. Distance learning at the K-12 level is predominantly a synchronous delivery model, with minimal asynchronous instruction. The CDLI also offered online course reviews for students specific to 14 public examinable courses. The reviews utilized recorded instruction and solutions to sample questions related to provincial learning outcomes.

While blended learning occurs primarily at the post-secondary level in Newfoundland and Labrador, the CDLI does allow any provincial educator, including classroom teachers, to register in their portal and use the CDLI's asynchronous course materials with their face-to-face students. While the CDLI does track the number of educators that are registered in the portal, an account in the system does not necessarily mean that the person uses the resources in their classroom. During the 2014-15 school year, there were 6240 teacher registrations and 221 principal registrations in the CDLI portal.

### Governance and Regulation

At present the CDLI operates within the Primary, Elementary and Secondary Branch of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. It receives a block funding allocation from the provincial government that funds the administration, all teacher and staff salaries, course development activities, Internet/network connectivity costs for schools, K-12 technology integration for the provincial K-12 school system. The CDLI also purchases and deploys all hardware and software required for the delivery of its online learning program, including all required computer equipment, videoconferencing equipment and other learning resources that enhance the distance learning experience.

At this time there is no language in the *Education Act* related to K-12 distance education. There are also no policies or regulations specifically related to K-12 distance education within the Ministry of Education beyond those utilized by the CDLI itself. The Ministry of Education continues to track the method of delivery that students complete their studies and this data is available through the *K-12 School Profile System*.

## 3.2 Nova Scotia (NS)

*Population: 942,926*

*Number of K-12 Schools: 395*

*Number of K-12 Students: 119,383*

*Number of K-12 E-Learning Programs: 2*

*Number of K-12 E-Learning Students: ~2,300*



### K-12 E-Learning Programs

There are two distance education programs in the province. First, the Nova Scotia Virtual School (NSVS) provided online courses to approximately 800 students from the eight English-speaking school boards and the *Conseil scolaire acadien provincial* during the 2014-15 school year. Second, the correspondence studies program provided courses to approximately 1,500 students enrolled in courses through correspondence study program. Close to half of these students attend a public school while the other half are adult students, home-schooled students or students living outside of Nova Scotia. Currently, work is ongoing to transition these correspondence courses to an online delivery format.

There were also a number of blended learning initiatives in Nova Scotia that are being implemented in the school system. There are increasing expectations that students at all grade levels will utilize technology and online resources to demonstrate achievement of curriculum outcomes. For example, *Google Apps for Education* is now available to all students, teachers, and administrators province-wide and there are approximately 54,000 active Google accounts on the server. Further, the Ministry provides a blended learning platform that saw extensive use in classrooms around the province (i.e., more than 27,500 active users including teachers and students in primary through to grade 12).

### Governance and Regulation

The Learning Resources and Technology Services division of the Public Schools Branch of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development manages distance education programs in Nova Scotia.

The provision of distance education through the Nova Scotia Virtual School continues to be governed by the eleven provisions included in the agreement between the government of Nova Scotia and the Nova Scotia Teachers Union. As a contract between the government and teachers' union, most of the provisions deal with teacher certification and quality of life issues. For example, there are provisions related to defining the workday, professional development requirements, program oversight, class size and the management of the distance programs.

### 3.3 Prince Edward Island (PE)

*Population: 145,211*

*Number of K-12 Schools: 63*

*Number of K-12 Students: 20,131*

*Number of K-12 E-Learning Programs: 0*

*Number of K-12 E-Learning Students: 44*



#### **K-12 E-Learning Programs**

At present there are no K-12 distance education programs in Prince Edward Island. Through an inter-provincial agreement students in Prince Edward Island have the ability to access online courses offered by the distance education program offered by the New Brunswick Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. During the 2014-15 school year there were 11 French first language students and 33 English language students enrolled in online courses through this program.

According to the Department, there was no intentional blended learning occurring in public schools. All provincial credits were attained in a classroom setting, by distance education, or by external credit. However, the Department also indicated that blended learning was a national trend they would be following closely as it became more prevalent.

#### **Governance and Regulation**

Internal regulation continues to be driven by Ministerial Directives No. MD 2008–05, which apply to courses delivered during the regular school day. The directive broadly defines distance education and outlines a series of beliefs about the nature of distance education instruction. Further, individual schools and districts that participate in distance education programs must adhere to guidelines found in the provincial *Distance Education Handbook* document. The updated document specifies the use of distance education for students in particular circumstances.

## 3.4 New Brunswick (NB)

*Population: 755,464*

*Number of K-12 Schools: 314*

*Number of K-12 Students: 98,906*

*Number of K-12 E-Learning Programs: 2*

*Number of K-12 E-Learning Students: 2750*



### **K-12 E-Learning Programs**

Both the Anglophone and Francophone sectors of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development manage K –12 online learning programs. These programs service secondary students in New Brunswick in either of the province’s two official languages. During the 2014-15 school year there were approximately 1,800 students enrolled in the Anglophone program and 655 students enrolled in the Francophone program. In addition to these distance students, there were also 950 English and 4258 French face-to-face students registered in the learning management system using online courses in a more blended learning model under the direction of their local school’s classroom teachers.

Additionally, over the past two years there has been an increased focus placed on professional learning courses for educators and adult learners. Courses have focused on two main areas: Early Learning and Child Care and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The ASD course has been used by all four provinces in Atlantic Canada.

### **Governance and Regulation**

There remains no specific legislation that governs K-12 distance education in New Brunswick. The system continues to operate based on collaboration between the Ministry of Education and individual school districts. The Ministry has published a policy handbook, different for both the English and French systems, that outlines the responsibilities of a variety of individuals at the Ministry, district and school level to ensure the orderly implementation of the distance education program. Interestingly, in addition to school officials such as a registrar and local site facilitator, there are specific responsibilities outlined for both distance education students and the parents of students who are enrolled in distance education programs.



## 3.5 Quebec (QC)

*Population: 8,263,600*

*Number of K-12 Schools: 3,113*

*Number of K-12 Students: 1,132,506*

*Number of K-12 E-Learning Programs: 4*

*Number of K-12 E-Learning Students: ~43,736*



### K-12 E-Learning Programs

During the 2014-15 school year, *Société de formation à distance des commissions scolaires du Québec* (SOFAD), a not-for-profit organization tasked with the development and production of correspondence distance learning materials that school boards utilize in their own district-based programs, served 29,386 students (i.e., adult students who are 16 years or older in the school year). SOFAD also provides an e-learning platform (i.e., EduSOFAD) that offers many of the courses online for the students who prefer to work online (which accounted for 1,957 course enrollments in 2014-15).

The Leading English Education and Resource Network (LEARN) is a not-for-profit organization that provides a variety of distance learning opportunities to approximately 8,500 English-language students from all nine English-speaking school boards in the province. In addition close to 36,500 students from across the province benefit from blended learning asynchronous services provided by LEARN.

The *Écoles en réseau* (ÉER) has 398 teachers in 250 schools (although over 500 participants including support staff, professionals, managers, etc.), and connected more than 5000 students through use of *Knowledge Forum* and various synchronous tools. Finally, the Beauce-Etchemin School Board offered 18 remedial online courses, as well as nine full-time online courses. During the 2014-15 school year more than 850 students registered for the services (remedial and full-time).

### Governance and Regulation

The *Education Act* in Quebec makes no reference to distance education and since 1995 school boards have held the primary responsibility for distance education policies and regulations.

However, private schools are regulated by a different Act (i.e., *Loi sur les établissements privés*), that contains provisions pertaining to online education. The Ministry has yet to approve an online initiative that meets the conditions stated in the *Loi sur les établissements privés*.

## 3.6 Ontario (ON)

*Population: 13,537,994*

*Number of K-12 Schools: 4,893*

*Number of K-12 Students: 2,003,253*

*Number of K-12 Distance Education Programs: ~81*

*Number of K-12 Distance Education Students: ~87,000*



### K-12 E-Learning Programs

Each of the 60 English-speaking and 12 French-speaking school boards have the ability to offer some form of online learning using the Ministry-sponsored learning management system and online curricular materials or their own. Many of these school boards also participate in one or more consortiums designed to allow its school board members to work together to maximize their online offerings by sharing course offerings, resources and students. Additionally, the Independent Learning Centre (ILC) continues to provide correspondence distance education opportunities to adolescent and adult students throughout the province. Finally, there are as many as eight different private or independent K-12 online learning programs, some of whom have formed their own consortium.

It is estimated that in 2014-15 there were approximately 60,000 students taking online courses from various school board e-learning programs. It is also estimated the ILC has approximately 20,000 students enrolled in their correspondence courses. Finally, the most recent data available indicated there were approximately 7,000 students enrolled in private online schools.

It should also be noted that in their response to the 2013-14 report, the Ministry of Education indicated that there were approximately 237,930 unique blended learning logins in their system. The Ministry did not respond to repeated requests to update this data.

### Governance and Regulation

Since 2006, the Provincial e-Learning Strategy has guided the Ministry to provide school districts with various supports necessary to provide students with online and blended learning opportunities, as well as providing e-learning leadership within the provincially funded school system. School districts are responsible for the delivery of online learning.

Private online schools operate as a business in Ontario, independent of the Ministry of Education. Those schools offering credits towards the Ontario Secondary School Diploma require an inspection. Inspectors look for evidence of ongoing interactions between the teacher and students in the online learning environment, and for a direct link between the specific and overall curriculum expectations being taught and assessed in compliance with Ministry policy and observed practices. Inspectors review online courses for compliance with Growing Success, 2010.

## 3.7 Manitoba (MB)

*Population: 1,272,000*

*Number of K-12 Schools: 800*

*Number of K-12 Students: 182,073*

*Number of K-12 E-Learning Programs: ~38*

*Number of K-12 E-Learning Students: ~9500*



### K-12 E-Learning Programs

Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning continued to support three distance learning options in 2014-15: Independent Study Option (ISO), Teacher Mediated Option (TMO) and Web-Based Course (WBC) Option. The ISO (print) continued to offer 51 courses in English and 11 courses in French for grades 9-12 students. The TMO is managed by rural school divisions through the TMO Consortium in partnership with Manitoba Education. Students in grades K-12 and teachers communicate by audio teleconferencing several times per week. The WBC Option (online) provided access to 43 courses in English and 4 courses in French. Each school division in the province has participated in one or more of the above distance education program options; however, participation varies from year to year depending on the changing needs of students and schools. The numbers outlined for the 2014–15 school year indicate approximately 2,577 enrollments in the ISO, 389 in the TMO and 6,500 student enrollments in the WBC Option. Overall, there were approximately 9,500 distance education enrollments in programs directly supported by Manitoba Education and students could be enrolled in more than one program.

In terms of blended learning, Manitoba Education provides teachers with access to the provincial learning management system in order to support and supplement their classroom teaching practices. Teachers make requests for courses (and to add students to those courses) through an online Web-Based Course Request System. As such, school divisions and schools develop their own blended learning programs and determine how to infuse technology into their classrooms to best suit the needs of their learners. Additionally, Manitoba Education assists teachers in understanding the pedagogy of blended and online learning through training workshops and presentations.

### Governance and Regulation

The only reference in the Public Schools Act regarding distance education is mention that the Minister of Education can approve courses of study, including correspondence and other courses. Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning has issued other regulatory and policy documents, along with handbooks for each of the three distance learning options.

The Ministry has created a framework that allows for a virtual collegiate to operate in Manitoba. The formation of the virtual collegiate occurred as part of a three-year pilot collaboration among educational entities already recognized and operating distance education programs in the province. A signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Province governs the collaboration. To date, the Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre (MFNERC) has signed an MOU with the Province and was granted a Manitoba school code for Wapaskwa Virtual Collegiate effective September 2014. Discussions are still underway with another entity that has shown a similar interest.

## 3.8 Saskatchewan (SK)

*Population: 1,138,879*

*Number of K-12 Schools: 762*

*Number of K-12 Students: 175,202*

*Number of K-12 E-Learning Programs: 16*

*Number of K-12 E-Learning Students: ~15,000*



### K-12 E-Learning Programs

During the 2014-15 school year there were 14 school divisions and two other providers of distance education in Saskatchewan based on the Saskatchewan Distance Learning Course Repository. The Ministry of Education indicates that it only gathers data for students taking online distance education courses that count towards completion of a secondary diploma at the 10, 20, 30 levels (i.e., grades 10 to 12). During the 2014-15 school year, there were 4,980 secondary course enrolments involving 3,405 unique students and 4,825 credits were earned. The Ministry also indicated that there were students in Kindergarten through grade 9 taking courses online through a variety of providers, but that the Ministry did not collect data about their involvement. Based on previous editions of this study, researchers have estimated that the actual level of K-12 distance education activity could be four to five times the figure reported by the Ministry.

At this time, the Ministry does not track individual blended learning programs in the province. All 28 school divisions are implementing the Saskatchewan Technology in Education Framework (TEF) and are working to ensure that students have access to the tools they require to succeed in school, including access to technology. Within school divisions, teachers have the choice to deliver instruction using a variety of teaching methods, including blended learning, to best meet the needs of their students. Many school divisions are currently building blended learning modules and resources to support teachers in blending instruction in their classrooms.

### Governance and Regulation

The delivery of distance education, online learning, and blended learning in the province is guided by the TEF, which outlines the roles and responsibilities of the education sector with regards to the use of technology in education. It contains a number of outcomes and indicators that guide the use of technology in the province in the areas of teaching and learning, administrative operations and infrastructure. In particular, the TEF requires that school divisions ensure distance and online learning opportunities are available to students, intra- and inter-school division learning opportunities are available to students with local support provided, distance learners have success rates that are equivalent to students in traditional classroom environments, and assistive technology and technical support is available to students with intensive needs and/or school personnel.

## 3.9 Alberta (AB)

*Population: 4,025,074*

*Number of K-12 Schools: 2,152*

*Number of K-12 Students: 616,375*

*Number of K-12 E-Learning Programs: ~20*

*Number of K-12 E-Learning Students: ~70,000*



### K-12 E-Learning Programs

It is believed that approximately 20 school divisions in the province offer an assortment of online programs, catering mostly to students in their own geographic jurisdiction. Some manage students in other regions of the province, but at present there is only one single province-wide program (i.e., the Alberta Distance Learning Centre [ADLC]) that offers courses to any student in the province. ADLC provides services to over 40,000 students in 618 schools and offers over 250 courses. Courses are provided in print, online and in blended formats in partnership with local schools and authorities. The *Centre francophone d'éducation à distance* (CFÉD) formed in 2005 to provide senior level courses in French to Francophone students in the province, and today offers 65 secondary courses.

As the Ministry of Education does not collect distance education enrollment data, or online and blended learning delivery, there is no centralized data source to provide an accurate level of activity. Estimates have been derived from data received from individual programs and previous data collected and reported in this annual report. As such, these estimates may be inaccurate as they remain unconfirmed by the Ministry or any data it does collect.

### Governance and Regulation

At present, the *School Act* grants the Minister of Education the authority to make regulations with respect to public and private distance education programs. The Ministry has yet to exert that authority beyond outlining some specific requirements primarily related to the amount of required instructional time as a part of its their annual *Guide to Education*.

The service agreement for the ADLC and the current conditional grant for *Centre francophone d'éducation à distance* have been extended for a period up to and including August 31, 2018. These extensions allow the Ministry to engage in work that will inform the next steps for the future of distance, online and blended learning in Alberta; and will enable the ministry to share more robust information in the future.

It should be noted that since 2007 there have been consultation initiatives related specifically to distributed learning policy, that was later included as a part of the consultations on the *2011 Inspiring*

*Action in Education* initiative. These consultations were followed by a two-year review of distance education programs and services offered in the province by an external consulting firm with the goal of recommending a provincial model for distance education delivery. To date these efforts have not resulted in policy from the Ministry.

## 3.10 British Columbia (BC)

*Population: 4,631,302*

*Number of K-12 Schools: 3,850*

*Number of K-12 Students: 633,428*

*Number of K-12 E-Learning Programs: 76*

*Number of K-12 E-Learning Students: 78,499*



### K-12 E-Learning Programs

In 2014-15 there were 60 district-level public distributed learning schools (distance education providers) and 16 independent (or private) distributed learning schools that enrolled approximately 78,500 unique students in one or more courses. LearnNowBC continues to serve as a Web portal and single point of entry to information about public distributed learning schools for students, parents and educators in the province. Additionally, Open School BC provides provincial content and online hosting services on a cost-recovery model to school districts lacking the capacity or desire to manage their own.

The Ministry of Education has not yet begun to gather data on blended learning programs, but can report anecdotally that blended learning is on the increase. At present, the BC Learning Network is embarking on a major content development plan over the next three years. One of their aims is to create online content and digital resources that can be used in all school learning environments.

### Governance and Regulation

The distributed learning landscape in British Columbia has remained relatively stable over the past years. The legislative language in section 3.1 and section 75 (4.1) of the *School Act, 2006*, as well as section 8.1 of the *Independent School Act, 2006*, still govern the operation of distributed learning programs. Both pieces of legislation contain similar language concerning the establishment of distributed learning schools “only with the prior agreement of the Minister.” As such, these agreements between the Ministry and the school districts or independent schools serve as the main governance documents for distributed learning in British Columbia. In addition to these agreements, the Ministry also has a series of policy documents that outline the regulations that distributed learning schools must follow.

The current funding model in British Columbia does not differentiate between distributed learning and blended learning, or between face-to-face and blended learning. As there are different funding amounts for face-to-face courses and programs, as compared to distributed learning courses. Under the current policy, the delivery method is considered distributed learning as long as the student is at a distance from the teacher for the majority of the time. A “majority of the time” is not explicitly defined under the current regulations.



## 3.11 Yukon (YT)

*Population: 36,700*

*Number of K-12 Schools: 28*

*Number of K-12 Students: 5,122*

*Number of K-12 Distance Education Programs: 1*

*Number of K-12 Distance Education Students: ~421*



### K-12 Distance Programs

While continuing to sign MOU's with the existing partner school districts in British Columbia, Yukon Education is increasing the scope of distance and online program delivery. The aim is to increase programming within the Territory to eliminate the need for reliance on outside agencies providing educational opportunities to its student population. At present, this development includes the Aurora Virtual School (AVS), as well as students scheduled for independent 'study blocks' in their school that are taking one or more online courses delivered by teachers in their own school. In 2014-15 AVS managed courses for 58 grade 8-12 students taking at least one online course. There were an additional 48 grade 8-12 students, as well as 65 K-7 students, enrolled with distributed learning schools in British Columbia. Further, there were another ~250 students enrolled in online courses offered by their own schools.

Yukon Education also supports and tracks blended learning programs. Many Yukon students now access a learning management system (LMS) where teacher and students working together in group and individual modes, mostly in the same place and time with elements of student control over path and pace, with a blend of best face-to-face teaching practices and digitally managed learning. In other instances, student learning is individual, managed within an LMS, taking place in school, often alongside other students working on same or different LMS-based courses, with direct teacher support. During the 2014-15 school year, there were 379 students enrolled in one of these two blended learning options. However, many Yukon teachers use informal blended learning approaches for which Yukon Education does not keep data.

### Governance and Regulation

There have been no recent changes to the governance and regulation of K-12 distance education in the Yukon. The *Education Act, 2002* still allows the Minister of Education to provide distance education courses and charge fees for students to access those courses. However, the 2003 decision to provide these distributed learning courses at no cost to students up to the age of 21 continues to be followed.

The Department of Education also continues to govern the operation of individual distance education programs in the Yukon through individual Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) that it signs with each individual program.

## 3.12 Northwest Territories (NT)

*Population: 43,672*

*Number of K-12 Schools: 49*

*Number of K-12 Students: 8,204*

*Number of K-12 E-Learning Programs: 2*

*Number of K-12 E-Learning Students: 150*



### K-12 E-Learning Programs

Currently a distance learning pilot is being conducted that involves five small Northwest Territories community high schools located across three regional boards of education. The teachers are based in Inuvik and each class also includes a few Inuvik students. Support personnel for the pilot include volunteers, educational assistants and teachers who, as part of their teaching assignment, are located in each high school that has a distance learning student group.

During the 2014-15 school year, 112 students were enrolled in Alberta Distance Learning Centre (ADLC) courses. These courses continue to be a viable choice for some students, primarily students who have personal learning support systems. Francophone students regularly take print-based, self-paced ADLC courses through *Centre francophone d'éducation à distance*. Support for these courses is coordinated through the school principal, and parents are closely involved. The 2014-16 distance learning pilot is actually testing the difference an onsite support person makes in the completion and credit acquisition of courses offered from a distance.

Finally, each district education authority (i.e., school board) uses the Northwest Territories' adaptation of Manitoba's *Literacy with Information Communications Technology* curriculum to varying degrees. This curriculum sets the stage for ICT-supported learning that might result in blended learning practices that are not known enough to be articulated at this time.

### Governance and Regulation

The *Education Act, 2009* allows various educational bodies to "authorize, supervise and evaluate the use of distance learning programs in the provision of the education program" (p. 72). Since 2004 the Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) has had a Memorandum of Understanding with the ADLC for Northwest Territories students to use their courses. In 2010 the regional boards of education took on the funding of these courses. Additionally, Section 3.3 of the *Northwest Territories School Handbook* outlines a series of requirements for distance learning that schools must compile with.

### 3.13 Nunavut (NU)

*Population: 35,591*

*Number of K-12 Schools: 42*

*Number of K-12 Students: 9,728*

*Number of K-12 E-Learning Programs: 0*

*Number of K-12 E-Learning Students: 96*



#### **K-12 E-Learning Programs**

At present, Nunavut does not have its own K-12 distance education program. During the 2014-15 school year there were 96 students enrolled in 186 different courses offered through the Alberta Distance Learning Center (ADLC).

#### **Governance and Regulation**

The *Education Act, 1999* allows various educational bodies to “authorize, supervise and evaluate the use of distance learning programs in the provision of the education program” (p. 75). Additionally there are territorial agreements signed with individual distance education programs authorized to provide services to Nunavut students in the K-12 system. At present students wishing to enroll in distance education courses contact their school principal.

The Department of Education is in the early stages of consideration of a delivery plan for distance education that involves several moving parts that once finalized will determine the capacity and direction distance education will take in Nunavut. The is the latest efforts that began around 2012 with attempts to develop a ministerial directive regarding access to and delivery of distance education.

## 3.14 Federal

*Population: 1,400,685*

*Number of K-12 Schools: 414*

*Number of K-12 Students: 106,500*

*Number of K-12 E-Learning Programs: 4*

*Number of K-12 E-Learning Students: ~2,000*



### **K-12 E-Learning Programs**

At present there is a total of four K-12 distance education programs designated as First Nations, Metis and/or Inuit programs. Two of these were located in Ontario (i.e., Keewaytinook Internet High School and Gai hon nya ni: the Amos Key Jr. E~Learning Institute), one in Manitoba (i.e., Wapaskwa Virtual Collegiate), and one in Alberta (i.e., SCcyber E-learning Community). There are other First Nations, Metis and Inuit organizations that have been exploring the adoption of K-12 distance education. However, for a variety of reasons – lack of bandwidth or connectivity, lack of community buy-in, lack of expertise for implementation and others—they have not yet established distance education programs

### **Governance and Regulation**

Approximately 60% of First Nations students attend schools on reserve. In support of these students Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) provides funding support directly to Band Councils and First Nations education organizations. First Nations or their respective regional organizations have responsibility for managing and delivering education programs and services in band-operated schools on reserve. For students who live on reserves but attend provincial schools off-reserve, INAC pays the tuition that the applicable province charges for non-Aboriginal students. This is paid to the First Nation in question or directly to the provincial Ministry of Education depending on the agreement in place.

In 2013 the decision was made to no longer enter into service agreements directly with e-learning programs. Instead, funding is provided to the regional authorities to make the decisions on the nature of educational opportunities that should be funded within their jurisdiction. This change came into effect following the 2014-15 school year.

Regardless of the funding agreement, INAC requires that each of the educational programs (including K-12 distance education) work with the individual Ministry of Education in the province or territory in which they operate in order to gain accreditation. The accreditation process involves a validation that the education program is using provincial curriculum, which allows the program to grant provincial credit. As Ministries cannot fund enrolment in federal education programs, the First Nations education programs (including K-12 distance education programs) must also enter into agreements with individual school districts/divisions to serve off-reserve students.

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## 5. Appendix A

### ***Ministry of Education Survey***

Please review the provincial or territorial profile from the 2014 edition of the *State of the Nation: K-12 E-Learning in Canada* report.

1. Have there been any changes in the legislative regime related to K-12 online distance education?

2. Have there been any changes in the regulatory regime related to K-12 online distance education?

3. (a) Are there additional online distance education programs, not mentioned in the 2014 report that should be included in an updated report?

(b) Are there additional blended learning programs, not mentioned in the 2014 report that should be included in an updated report?

4. (a) How many students were involved in K-12 online distance education during the 2014-15 school year?

(b) How many students were involved in K-12 blended learning during the 2014-15 school year?

5. Are there any additional issues related to K-12 distance education, not mentioned in the 2014 report that should be included in an updated report?

6. Is there any information in the 2014 report that you feel should be updated or revised?

7. Could you describe the history of the development of K-12 distance education in your jurisdiction? Alternatively, is there a reading or online resource that you could direct us to with this information?



## 6. Appendix B

### *Individual Program Survey*

What is the name and website of your K–12 distance learning program?

The following questions are about your 2014-15 e-learning program, not the current program.

1. Describe the methods of delivery for your distance learning program (indicate all that apply).

Print materials

Instructional television

Web-based/Online

Other:

2. How many students were enrolled in your distance learning program?

3. How many different courses did your distance learning program offer?

4. (a) How many full-time teachers were employed by your distance learning program?

(b) How many part-time teachers were employed by your distance learning program?

5. (a) Did your program use a blended learning approach (where some part of your program required onsite instruction)?

Yes

No

(b) How many students were enrolled in your blended learning program?

(c) How many different courses did your blended learning program offer?

(d) How many teachers were employed by your blended learning program?

6. Please indicate whether your program was primarily synchronous (time dependent) or asynchronous (time independent), select only one.

Synchronous

Asynchronous

A balance of asynchronous and synchronous

7. Please indicate how registration in your program is managed.

Continuous entry (student intake occurs throughout the school year)

Specific entry dates and/or completion dates

8. Please add any additional information about your program you believe would be of benefit to our research.

If there are any follow-up questions, or you would like to be included in one of the e-learning vignettes profiling your program, who would be the best person for the researcher to contact?

Name:

Title:

E-mail address:

Telephone number:

## 7. Call for Sponsors – 2016 State of the Nation: K-12 E-Learning in Canada Study

Canadian eLearning Network (CANeLearn) is seeking funding for the 2016 K-12 e-learning study of Canada. If your organization is interested in participating through sponsorship by supporting the ninth annual *State of the Nation Study: K-12 E-Learning in Canada*, please contact Michael Barbour, principal investigator at [mkbarbour@gmail.com](mailto:mkbarbour@gmail.com), or Randy LaBonte, Chief Executive Officer of CANeLearn at [rlabonte@CANeLearn.net](mailto:rlabonte@CANeLearn.net).

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.

CANeLearn is a new Canadian registered not-for-profit society. CANeLearn's mission is to provide leadership that champions student success by supporting organizations and educators involved in online and blended learning through networking, collaboration and research opportunities. CANeLearn provides members with networking, collaboration and research opportunities.

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;
- Receive recognition as a thought leader for cutting-edge research of K-12 e-learning in Canada for sponsoring the research study; and
- Sponsor recognition during CANeLearn events highlighting the study.

The plans for the 2016 study include an updating of the K-12 policy and activity reports for each of the provinces. Also, the 2016 study will feature a return to the more detailed format that includes brief issue papers and vignettes from a variety of K-12 e-learning programs across the different province and territories. Further, the individual program survey will return. Finally, there will be a greater development of the new online version of the report.

For-profit and non-profit institutions, organizations, individuals, foundations and companies are welcome to partner with CANeLearn 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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