



Documenting Triage: Detailing the Response of Provinces and Territories to Emergency Remote Teaching

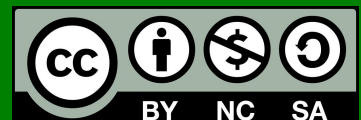
August 2020

A special report of the Canadian eLearning Network

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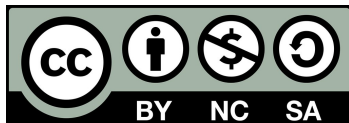
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Forward

It is my honour to provide the forward for this essential national education report on the pandemic activities across Canada.

This marks approximately five months since COVID-19 changed the world forever. K-12 education systems across Canada for the most part ground to a halt, with the exception of the few provinces who embraced digital learning and were able to pivot more easily to online. The majority were forced into an emergency mode of up-skilling teachers to adapt to online ‘emergency’ teaching. While it wasn’t perfect, passionate teachers and leaders embraced new digital learning tools and platforms to enable sustained hybrid learning. Districts, in some cases, shipped thousands of computers and tablets to homes to address the equity challenges that became evident across Canada.

Necessity truly served as the mother of innovation.

Through the struggles Canadians collectively innovated and pioneered new technologies that became mission critical to sustain learning and engage students beyond the classroom, enabling learning at home.

As we reflect on the most transformational educational crisis times in our modern history, we are presented with opportunities to take the lessons learned and best practices forward into the September return to school and pivot beyond pockets of innovation.

This national review and analysis of crisis learning in the spring presents learning opportunities to redefine the classroom of the future that can bring learning beyond the four walls and into our communities across Canada and around the world.

As we prepare for back to school, imagine the possibilities of leveraging innovative tools to allow students to explore the outdoors applying math and science activities. Or while learning at home, using a multitude of tools found in the kitchen to have students embark on inquiry based project. Challenge your students to capture their learning on a video blog to share their story.

It takes a digital village to raise a child in the 21st century. We’re all in this together. There’s no turning back. Here’s to keeping the learning curve steep!

Robert Martellacci, M.A. EdTech
President MindShare Learning
CEO, C21 Canada

Executive Summary

Ahead of the World Health Organization's (WHO) March 11, 2020 declaration that COVID-19 was indeed a pandemic, and as Canada began diagnosing its first cases of the coronavirus, Canada's Chief Public Health Officer, Dr. Theresa Tam, urged Canadian communities to "prepare for stronger public health measures to contain the spread of the new coronavirus, including closures of schools" (CMAJ News, 2020). Two days later, New Brunswick was the first of the 13 provinces and territories to close their schools across the province. However, within 10 days all K-12 schools across Canada were closed.

Through the Canadian eLearning Network (CANeLearn), a leading voice in Canada for learner success in K-12 online and blended learning, this report highlights the moves each Canadian jurisdiction made to continue to promote learning throughout the pandemic. Information was gathered for each province and territory, through government websites, educational organizations, and current news releases regarding each jurisdiction's strategies to provide supports, resources, and technologies appropriate for the continuation of emergency remote teaching and learning. This report is designed to delineate how each jurisdiction managed their emergency remote teaching during the spring of 2020. The goal is to report on what occurred, and it is not intended to assess the quality of what occurred. This shift was dependent on the supports and resources provided by each jurisdiction across Canada. By April 21, 2020 all of Canada had moved forward with emergency remote teaching for their K-12 learners.

In providing emergency remote teaching, the three territories took much longer to release their plans than their provincial counterparts. If the territories were excluded, the average length of time it took the 10 provinces to release their emergency remote teaching plans was 14 calendar days. The supports and resources provided by each of the jurisdictions manifested in various ways, such as access to mail delivery of educational learning packages, radio and television broadcasting, centralized learning management systems and access to a variety of digital tools. Some provinces such as Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Ontario, and British Columbia provided technology to students. All jurisdictions – except for Alberta, Ontario, and New Brunswick – provided resources that did not require internet access. Further, some jurisdictions, such as British Columbia, Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut made specific considerations for Indigenous students who may be on-the-land and offered a land-based curriculum for learners who did not have access to both the internet or to educational packages.

While access to resources and supports for emergency remote learning is key for the success of any program, so too is the level of preparedness and professional learning of teachers. The vast majority of teachers across Canada had no training or professional experience with online pedagogies related to using digital tools in their teaching or even how to develop online content that was instructionally sound. Yukon, Ontario, Quebec, and Nova Scotia were the only provinces that announced some form of professional learning for teachers. These professional learning opportunities were evidenced in the form of online professional development days, access to webinars, educational toolkits, access to paid digital tools, virtual learning environment instruction, and University courses. Other jurisdictions referred teachers to other ongoing professional learning options already in existence.

Introduction

The Canadian eLearning Network (CANeLearn) (2020) was founded “with a vision to be the leading voice in Canada for learner success in K-12 online and blended learning” (¶ 1). One of the ways that CANeLearn has traditionally achieved this vision has been their longstanding partnership with the annual report produced by the *State of the Nation: K-12 e-Learning in Canada* research team, which continues to “examine 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” (Barbour & LaBonte, 2015, p. 2). However, the events of the 2019-20 school year – and, in particular, during the Spring 2020 – were not the normal type of distance, online, and blended learning that was regularly researched.

In what has quickly become a seminal article published in *Educause Review*, Hodges et al. (2020) distinguished what occurred in K-12 education during the Spring 2020 from traditional online learning by using the term ‘emergency remote teaching.’ Essentially, the more widely used descriptor of online learning depicts online learning models and materials that take time and preparation. Online 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. To differentiate from this, Hodges and his colleagues described emergency remote teaching as:

In contrast to experiences that are planned from the beginning and designed to be online, emergency remote teaching is 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. (¶ 13)

Like any emergency situation, educators triaged the situation with the goal of providing a basic level of stability until there was an opportunity for more careful consideration of the situation.

While those involved in the field of K-12 distance, online, and blended learning (referred to generically as e-learning for the remainder of this report) have been careful to use this kind of language, the reality is that most people – particularly within the general public – do not see a difference. Regardless of terminology, many teachers have found themselves unprepared for the challenges of using online content and tools to provide their students effective and meaningful learning experiences – a situation that has been foreseen for many years. For example, in the United States Smith et al. (2005) found that only 15% of K-12 teachers have been trained to teach online. Two years later, Rice and Dawley (2007) surveyed teachers who had been hired by

K-12 online programs to teach online and found that less than 40% of all online teachers reported receiving any professional development before they began teaching online. Five years later, Kennedy and Archambault (2012) reported that 1.3% of the universities they surveyed had some form of field experience related to K-12 online teaching. More recently, Archambault et al. (2016) indicated that only 11% of the responding universities had any focus on K-12 online teaching. Within the Canadian context, Archibald et al. (2020) reported that 32% of universities offered field experiences in K-12 online program settings for pre-service or in-service teachers (although only 42% of universities with teacher preparation programs responded to their survey). Regardless, these consistent findings over the past decade and a half underscore the reality that the vast majority of teachers have had little or no exposure to K-12 e-learning or how to enact effective pedagogy and/or instructional design in that environment.

It is safe to state that most teachers were unprepared to transition to an online setting during the emergency remote teaching that occurred during Spring 2020. However, the same cannot be said within different jurisdictions. Some provinces and territories were potentially much better positioned to provide continuity of learning than others. For example, several provinces and territories had centralized e-learning programs that could have been leveraged to provide online course content, a learning management system, and other online tools for emergency remote teaching. For approximately a decade, the Ontario Ministry of Education has provided each school board a coordinator focused on e-learning, or technology-enabled learning, who is responsible for assisting teachers in using the province's learning management system and online course content in their face-to-face and online teaching. Table 1, on the following page, provides an overview of the state of online learning in each jurisdiction based on the 2019 annual *State of the Nation: K-12 e-Learning in Canada* report (i.e., representing the 2018-19 school year) (Barbour & LaBonte, 2019).

Table 1.
Existing e-Learning Structure Prior to the Pandemic

Jurisdiction	# of Programs	# of Students	% of Students Involved	Centralized Program	Centralized LMS	Centralized Course Development	Centralized Blended Learning Access
NL	1	1,140	1.8%	✓	✓ ¹	✓	✓ ¹
NS	2	2,381	2.0%	✓	✓	✓	✓
PE	0	~100	0.1%	✓ ²			
NB	2	~3,270	3.3%	✓	✓	✓	
QC	5	~40,000	4.0%	✓ ³		✓ ⁴	
ON	84	~89,000	4.4%	✓ ³	✓	✓	✓
MB	38	~11,875	5.7%	✓	✓	✓	✓
SK	21	8,378	4.5%				
AB	33	75,806	10.6%	✓		✓	
BC	74	~65,000	10.2%				
YT	2	170	3.1%	✓	✓	✓	✓
NT	1	130	1.4%	✓	✓	✓	
NU	0	~70	0.1%				
Federal	5	~2,000	1.9%				

¹ There is a single, province-wide learning management system that teachers can access for the purposes of blended learning. However, it is undetermined how widely known that availability is among classroom teachers, and the existing content is limited to secondary courses (with some intermediate courses included).

² The provincial program is actually the one offered by the New Brunswick Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

³ The only centralized program in both Quebec and Ontario is a correspondence-based model that is specifically for adult students.

⁴ Either through their correspondence program for French language students or through LEARN for English language students.

Provinces like Alberta and British Columbia have historically had a higher proportion of students with experience in online learning; and, as many of these students were engaged in supplemental settings, their school-based teachers may have had a greater familiarity with the available online tools and content. Similarly, provinces with centralized learning management systems had the ability to provide access to teachers. However, it appears that beyond those already engaged in online learning, it was only Nova Scotia and Ontario that had much of a focus on blended learning (which would have actively engaged classroom teachers in the use of online tools and content). Table 1 simply provides an overview of the relative position each jurisdiction was in with respect to the potential to transition to some form of remote teaching – emergency or otherwise; not necessarily how they actually made that transition or how many teachers were actually practicing some form of e-learning.

Methodology

Data were collected by consulting various existing collections of data related to the response from various provinces and territories (e.g., the People for Education's *Tracking Canada's education systems' response to COVID-19*⁵, Borden Ladner Gervais' *Canada-wide summary of COVID-19 education updates*⁶, etc.). These collections collated data in the spring for each jurisdiction as they released their online educational guidelines and response due to COVID-19. The data found in these collections included, but was not limited to: closure dates, learning expectations, resources, grades and reports, and curricula foci. Some of these collections were updated several times throughout the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year, and offered the basis for following jurisdictional updates as they became available. Data from these collections were corroborated against each other.

Additional data were gleaned from each jurisdiction's Ministry of Education website, with further websites developed specifically to e-learning through the pandemic. Through these Ministry websites, data extracted outlined information for curriculum foci, requirements for attendance, information regarding jurisdictional examinations, resources available for students, websites or television and radio resources for e-learning, and technologies used and delivered to students. For specific dates and other information related to education during the pandemic, as well as any additional missing information, a general internet search was conducted of news releases from major news sources for each jurisdiction who were also tracking educational initiatives for COVID-19 throughout the spring. Many of these news sources corroborated the above mentioned collections, and also offered quotes from Ministers regarding information that may not have been readily available through their Ministry's websites.

How to Read this Report

This report is designed to report how each jurisdiction managed their emergency remote teaching during Spring 2020. Each jurisdictional profile begins with data and a brief summary of the online tools and online course content that were available based on existing e-learning activity. The specific focus on emergency remote teaching begins with an indication of when schools

⁵ Available at <https://peopleforeducation.ca/our-work/tracking-canadas-education-systems-response-to-covid-19/>

⁶ Available at <https://www.blg.com/en/insights/2020/04/canada-wide-summary-of-covid-19-education-updates>

were closed and when schools re-opened (for those that did re-open during the 2019-20 school year). This is followed by:

- an accounting of which entities took action and, in a broad sense, what actions they took;
- the tools, content, and devices that were provided, curated, and/or created; and
- the nature of instruction that occurred (i.e., attendance requirements, teacher expectations, grading, etc.)

To begin it is useful to consider a national overview of what occurred prior to these jurisdictional profiles. Finally, while there may be some debate over whether what occurred in Spring 2020 could truly be described as teaching or instruction – or even learning – to be consistent with the terminology used by Hodges et al. (2020), the term remote teaching is used to describe what occurred in the K-12 setting during Spring 2020.

National Overview

While certain jurisdictions may have been better positioned than others to transition to remote teaching in a short time period, it is important to note the circumstances of the emergency transition that occurred during Spring 2020. There have been many disruptions to the K-12 system over the years. For example, snow days are a common occurrence throughout Canada, such as the lengthy 10-day closure that St. John's, Newfoundland experienced following a record-setting 76.2 centimeters of snow in one day (CBC News, 2020c; Erdman, 2020). Earlier pandemics, such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) caused schools in certain regions to close. However, Spring 2020 was the first time in modern history that all schools across any province or territory, let alone all provinces and territories, were closed for an indefinite amount of time.

As Geerlof (2020) accurately summarized:

The sobering reality, however, reflects the extent to which our leaders were ill-prepared for a pandemic of this magnitude: most of our leaders seemed to be taken by surprise. Many public leaders and governments had not taken the necessary health care precautions, and a majority of business leaders never anticipated having to lead their companies in a paused economy. (¶ 5)

The same can be said for school leaders. The majority had never anticipated, nor were they prepared, to lead their schools when they were closed indefinitely. Similarly, the majority of government officials had never anticipated how to provide public education when schools were closed indefinitely.

The goal of this report is to simply report what occurred – not to assess the quality of what occurred. The information provided in the following pages is based on a review of published information from school boards/districts, Ministries/Departments of Education, the media, and other education related organizations. To begin, Table 2 indicates the date each province closed their schools and when they began their remote teaching.

Table 2.

Key emergency remote teaching dates

Jurisdiction	School closure	Remote teaching began
NL	March 17	April 2
NS	March 15	April 8
PE	March 23	April 6
NB	March 13	April 2
QC	March 16	March 30
ON	March 23	April 6
MB	March 20	March 30
SK	March 20	March 30
AB	March 16	March 20
BC	March 17	March 27
YT	March 18	April 16
NT	March 16	April 14
NU	March 17	April 21
Federal	Followed timeline of jurisdiction where school was located	

In addition to the key dates indicated above, it should also be noted that two jurisdictions began re-starting their schools during the 2019-20 school year. Quebec began allowing some students outside of the Montreal area to return to school as early as May 11, while British Columbia began their *K-12 Education Restart Plan* on June 1. Finally, the school year ended early in Newfoundland and Labrador – on June 5 instead of June 26.

In examining the information in Table 2, New Brunswick was the first jurisdiction to close their schools. However, within 10 days all K-12 schools across Canada were closed. Interestingly, while Alberta closed schools three days after New Brunswick (and was the fourth jurisdiction to do so), they were the first jurisdiction to release plans to allow for remote teaching to begin. Ontario was the last jurisdiction to close schools, but it only took them 15 calendar days to release plans to allow for remote teaching to occur. The average length of time it took jurisdictions from the date that schools closed to the date their remote teaching plans were released was 18 calendar days. Yet it should be noted that the three territories all took much longer to release their plans than their provincial counterparts. If the territories were excluded, the average length of time it took the 10 provinces to release their remote teaching plans was 14 calendar days. Regionally speaking, Western Canada tended to be quicker than these averages, while Atlantic Canada tended to be slowed than these averages.

Both as plans for remote teaching were being created and once they were released, an important feature to successful continuity of learning would be to ensure teachers received professional learning on the tools and content that was provided, as well as how to facilitate learning with those items. As was described in the introduction of this report, the vast majority of teachers had no training or professional experience with the pedagogy related to using online tools in their teaching. Further, most teachers did not know how to develop online content that was instructionally sound. Figure 1 indicates the jurisdictions that included some mention of professional development for teachers as a part of their announced remote teaching plans.



Figure 1. Virtual professional learning opportunities for teachers

As illustrated above, Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, and the Yukon all announced some form of professional learning for teachers. This professional learning included webinars, university courses, ‘how to’ tutorials, virtual professional development days, toolkits, and access to resources for curriculum support. This is not to say that other provinces did not provide any teacher professional development for remote teaching, only that those jurisdiction did not make any reference to that fact in their public announcements.

In addition to teacher training, another hurdle that needed to be overcome for remote teaching to occur was to ensure that students had access to the tools and content. As many of the tools that were used and the content that was provided came in an online format, Figure 2 indicates the jurisdictions that specifically announced the provision of devices to students.



Figure 2. Devices delivered to students

Ontario, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador provided devices on loan to homes with limited or no technology for students. This also occurred in British Columbia in some school districts. The technology that was provided to some students included iPads or tablets, laptops, or Chromebooks. Only Ontario and New Brunswick announced the provision of additional access to internet connectivity.

An alternative to providing digital devices and/or internet access was to make education resources accessible offline, which nine jurisdictions included in their plans (see Figure 3).



Figure 3. Accessibility to offline educational resources

All three territories and every province except New Brunswick, Ontario, and Alberta included the provision of non-digital educational packages for students with limited or no internet as a part of their announced planning. This statement is not to say that these three provinces did not also make this kind of material available. For example, in Ontario the Independent Learning Centre that is managed by TVO had extensive materials available in correspondence format that may have been used. Similarly, the Alberta Distance Learning Centre would have also had access to significant print-based correspondence packets that could have been used. However, plans to use these materials to help address the digital divide that students may have experienced were not part of the materials that were reviewed.

In terms of providing support for some of Canada's most vulnerable learners, few jurisdictions offered considerations for the support of Indigenous learners (see Figure 4).




Figure 4. Support for Indigenous learners

Only British Columbia, Yukon, the Northwest Territories, and Nunavut explicitly provided considerations for Indigenous learners. These supports came in the form of continued access to support staff, the inclusion of an *on-the-land* and *land-based learning* approaches where family activities, such as motorcycle maintenance, hunting and fishing, beadwork, etc. contributed to the successful completion of students for the 2019-20 school year.

The following pages provide more detailed profiles for each of the 10 provinces, three territories, and those schools falling under the federal jurisdiction.

Newfoundland Labrador

	<p><i>2018-19 Figures</i></p> <p>Population: 526,977 Number of K-12 Schools: 260 Number of K-12 Students: 64,336</p> <p>Number of K-12 Distance Learning Programs: 1 Number of K-12 Distance Learning: 1,140</p>
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Traditional K-12 Distance, Online, and Blended Learning Resources

The Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation (CDLI) is the sole provider of K-12 online learning in the province. During the 2018-19 school year it offered registration in 44 different courses using a combination of synchronous instruction and asynchronous course content housed in a learning management system. The CDLI also offered online course reviews for students in both online and blended contexts for a variety of courses throughout the secondary level.

Remote Teaching Activity

Key Dates:

- School closure on March 17, 2020
- Remote teaching began on April 2, 2020
- School year ended early, officially on June 5, 2020


The Ministry of Education and Early Childhood Development through the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District (NLESD) launched the *Learning at Home: Good at Learning Good at Life* website. This website was to be used as a resource for students and parents during remote teaching. The curricular focus was on literacy, numeracy, and well-being for grades K-12.

Students and teachers used a variety of digital tools, focusing on *Google Classroom* and *Google Meet*. Additionally, students in secondary grades had access to remote teaching tools and content from the CDLI. Students with limited access to the internet were provided with learning packages, and the NLESD delivered over 3,000 devices to students in need. The devices delivered consisted of Chromebooks and laptops with WiFi devices included, which connected to the internet via cellphone networks.

There were no specified expectations for attendance. Further, requirements for synchronous or asynchronous learning were not specified; although teachers were required to check-in with students on a weekly basis. All public exams were cancelled, and report card grades reflected

work assessed up until March 12, 2020, though students had the opportunity to improve their grades.

Nova Scotia

	<p><i>2018-19 Figures</i></p> <p>Population: 966,858 Number of K-12 Schools: 371 Number of K-12 Students: 120,604</p> <p>Number of K-12 Distance Learning Programs: 2 Number of K-12 Distance Learning Students: 2,381</p>
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Traditional K-12 Distance, Online, and Blended Learning Resources

The Nova Scotia Virtual School, as well as a traditional correspondence studies program, that provided access to a learning management system and online content for courses at the secondary level. Additionally, there were a number of blended learning initiatives, including a *Google Apps for Education (G-Suite)* available to all students, teachers, and administrators (where approximately 81% of all students had accounts as of the end of 2018-19 school year).

Remote Teaching Activity

Key Dates:

- School closure on March 15, 2020
- Remote teaching began April 8, 2020


The Ministry of Education and Early Childhood Development created links from their main website leading to resources for students, parents and guardians. The curricular focus was on literacy and numeracy with additional subjects like social science and science for grades 4-9. Resources for mental health were also available on the website.

Five learning packages were provided on their website between April 8 and June 3, 2020 and were available for download for each grade level. Teachers were asked to create learning opportunities that were assignment and project-based, and they were asked to maintain regular communication with students and parents. Technologies available for teachers and students were *Google Classroom* and *Learn360*, which are digital platforms used by teachers to connect with students online for the creation and grading of content. Teachers were offered e-learning support, which included curriculum suggestions and support resources per grade, e-learning tips and resources, ways to access technological support, and how-to tutorials. The Department of Education and Early Childhood Education distributed 4,300 Chromebooks to students and any secondary student in grades 10-12 who needed a device received one. Students who had limited or no access to the internet received learning packages, which were delivered bi-weekly by the *SaltWire Network*, a newspaper published in Halifax and distributed to province-wide. Students

in grades 10-12 also had access to a *Homework Hub*, which was a free online resource for math tutoring.

The attendance expectation for students to engage in remote teaching included five hours per week for grades K-6, ten hours for grades per week for grades 7-9, and three hours per course per week for grades 10-12. Final grades were based on work assigned and completed, and students received a final report card. All provincial standardized tests were cancelled including the Diplôme d'Études en Langue Française (DELF) and the International Baccalaureate (IB) exams.

Prince Edward Island

	<p><i>2018-19 Figures</i></p> <p>Population: 145,211 Number of K-12 Schools: 63 Number of K-12 Students: 20,131</p> <p>Number of K-12 Distance Learning Programs: 0 Number of K-12 Distance Learning Students: ~100</p>
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Traditional K-12 Distance, Online, and Blended Learning Resources

There were no distance, online, or blended learning programs in operation in the province during the 2018-19 school year. A small number of Prince Edward Island students enrolled in distance learning courses offered by both New Brunswick (online) and Nova Scotia (correspondence).

Remote Teaching Activity

Key Dates:


- School closure on March 23, 2020
- Remote teaching began April 6, 2020

The Ministry of Education and Life Long Learning created a webpage from their Ministry website that contained home learning resources to support remote teaching for each grade level. The curricular focus was on literacy, numeracy, and mental health and well-being. Additional information was also provided for students with English as an Additional Language (EAL). Educational activities for students were posted on both the Public Schools Branch and the French School Board's websites.

Specific technologies were not mentioned, but printed resources were offered to students with limited access to the internet. The Minister of Education and Life Long Learning urged all students regardless of internet access to continue with their learning (The Guardian, 2020).

The attendance expectation for engaging in remote teaching included Kindergarten with 30 minutes per day of holistic learning material, primary grades with 45 minutes per day, elementary grades with 60 minutes per day, intermediate grades with 90 minutes per day, and secondary grades with two hours per course per week. Provincial standardized testing was cancelled, and report cards were delivered. In June, teachers were required to contact their students and parents either by telephone, video, or in-person to review student progress and provide feedback.

New Brunswick

	<p><i>2018-19 Figures</i></p> <p>Population: 755,464 Number of K-12 Schools: 307 Number of K-12 Students: 98,906</p> <p>Number of K-12 Distance Learning Programs: 2 Number of K-12 Distance Learning Students: ~3,270</p>
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Traditional K-12 Distance, Online, and Blended Learning Resources

The province maintained centralized online learning programs in both English and French that provided access to a learning management system and online content for approximately 50 English language courses and 28 French language courses at the secondary level. In addition to teachers and students involved in the online learning programs, there was extensive use of the learning management system and online course content by brick-and-mortar teachers with their classroom-based students.

Remote Teaching Activity

Key Dates:

- School closure on March 13, 2020
- Remote teaching began April 2, 2020
- Gradual return to school for teachers in June 2020


The Department of Education launched their *Learning at Home* website as their remote teaching support. The curricular focus was on literacy and numeracy with additional focuses for grades 3-5 science, grades 6-8 science and social science, grades 9-10 personal skill development, and grades 11-12 history, technology, and second language. Further resources were provided focused on mental and physical health.

While teachers were responsible for creating remote teaching opportunities, the technologies and digital tools used to support remote teaching other than the website were not specified. The Provincial Government, with funds from the Department of Education, bought and distributed devices on loan, such as 1,000 iPads with data plans, 500 laptops, and 300 mobile internet hubs.

The expected attendance to engage in remote teaching included grades K-5 with five hours per week, grades 6-8 with ten hours per week, and grades 9-12 with 12.5 hours per week. Students were also encouraged to spend at least 30 minutes per day engaged in physical activity. The final report card was suspended and provincial standardized testing was cancelled.

Between June 1-5, 2020, teachers went back to their schools to finish out the school year and start planning for the fall. During this period teachers were offered opportunities to participate in professional development, such as webinars or learning with colleagues face-to-face. Students continued with remote teaching.

Quebec

	<p><i>2018-19 Figures</i></p> <p>Population: 8,263,600 Number of K-12 Schools: 3,102 Number of K-12 Students: 1,003,322</p> <p>Number of Distance Learning Programs: 5+ Number of Distance Learning Students: ~40,000+</p>
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Traditional K-12 Distance, Online, and Blended Learning Resources

While participation in distance and online learning is quite low in Quebec, the various distance and online programs – such as LEARN and *Société de formation à distance des commissions scolaires du Québec* – have developed significant amounts of course content in both online and traditional print formats (primarily, although not exclusively, at the secondary level). Additionally, the significant penetration of programs such as the *Écoles en réseau* (i.e., Networked Schools) have provided classroom teachers and students access to online learning tools and pedagogies.

Remote Teaching Activity

Key Dates:

- School closure March 16, 2020
- Remote teaching began March 30, 2020
- Return to school for some students on May 11, 2020


The Ministry of Education launched their remote teaching website, *Open School/L'École Ouverte*, as a resources for students, parents and guardians. The curricular focus was on literacy, numeracy, the arts, and physical and mental health. Students had the opportunity to “choose their own path” (Ministry of Education, 2020a) using the *Open School* website as a resource. Education kits were also available to students who had limited access to the internet.

The Ministry partnered with Télé-Québec, which is a publicly-funded educational network, to provide online television programming for preschool through to secondary students as well as parents. No other specific technologies or digital tools were mentioned in media releases. Anglophone teachers were offered the opportunity for professional learning through the *LEARN* website. This site offered support for the transition to remote teaching by providing teachers access to webinars. There was also a Virtual Campus that offered tutoring supports for both elementary and secondary students. Further teacher training was also offered through Université Téléo.

There was no specified expectation for attendance and report cards were delivered based on the first two reporting periods of the 2019-2020 school year. Provincial standardized exams were also cancelled.

Students returned to school on May 11, 2020 (with the exception of the Montreal area, which remained closed). This return was non-compulsory, and secondary students continued with remote teaching. The schools outside of Montreal returned gradually with continued physical distancing and health considerations (e.g., reduced class sizes, frequent hand washing, and personal protective equipment) being the key considerations.

Ontario

	<p><i>2018-19 Figures</i></p> <p>Population: 13,537,994 Number of K-12 Schools: 4850 Number of K-12 Students: 2,020,245</p> <p>Number of K-12 Distance Education Programs: ~81 Number of K-12 Distance Education Students: ~89,000</p>
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Traditional K-12 Distance, Online, and Blended Learning Resources

For approximately the past decade, Ontario has provided teachers with access to a province-wide learning management system and online content through the Ontario Educational Resource Bank. Additionally, the Ministry of Education has funded human resources at the school board level designed to encourage classroom teachers to incorporate blended learning practices and content into their teaching. Finally, the individual e-learning consortiums in the province have been active in providing professional learning for online and blended learning to teachers in the boards represented within their consortium.

Remote Teaching Activity

Key Dates:

- School closure March 23, 2020
- Remote teaching began April 6, 2020


The Ministry of Education launched their remote teaching website, *Learn at Home*, which offered a curated list of resources across grades and disciplines to support students, parents and guardians. The curricular focus was on literacy and numeracy.

The Ministry also partnered with Television Ontario (TVO), a publicly-funded educational network, to provide secondary students further access to distance education. TVO also offered enhanced access to learning tools such as *Mathify* (tutoring), *mPower* (games for STEM), and TVO Kids programming and YouTube channel for math, science and tech, and language. School boards across the province distributed technology (tablets or laptops) to students who did not have adequate access to technology or internet services. The Ministry partnered with Rogers Communications and Apple to allow school boards to distribute iPad devices pre-equipped with free Rogers LTE wireless data. Free data from Rogers was available until the end of June, 2020. The choice of technologies used by teachers was individually based by each school board as well as was the choice for use of blend of asynchronous and synchronous learning opportunities. The Ministry already provided a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) for teachers, which offered

free access to the learning management system, *Brightspace*. This site also offered free webinars, teacher resources, VLE training, and resources for parents on how to use the *Brightspace* platform.

The attendance expectations for students included, grades K-6 with five hours of engagement in remote teaching, grades 7 and 8 with 10 hours per week, and grades 9-12 with three hours per course per week for students on a semestered system, and 1.5 hours per course per week for students in a non-semestered system. Reports cards were delivered, however grades were frozen from March 13, 2020. Students were allowed to improve their grades only, and all provincial standardized testing was cancelled.

Manitoba

	<p><i>2018-19 Figures</i></p> <p>Population: 1,369,000 Number of K-12 Schools: 810 Number of K-12 Students: 208,796</p> <p>Number of K-12 Distance Learning Programs: ~38 Number of K-12 Distance Learning Students: ~11,875</p>
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Traditional K-12 Distance, Online, and Blended Learning Resources

At the beginning of the 2019-20 school year, the province provided distance learning opportunities in three different modalities: Independent Study Option (i.e., a correspondence delivery model that provided at least 58 courses in English and 12 courses in French for grades 9-12), Teacher Mediated Option (i.e., an audio teleconference system that provided at least 21 English courses for grades 9-12) and Web-Based Course Option (i.e., an online program that provided at least 44 courses in English and 4 courses in French). There were also two-provincial virtual collegiate (i.e., province-wide online secondary schools). Additionally, Manitoba Education licensed a provincial learning management system to encourage blended learning.

Remote Teaching Activity

Key Dates:

- School closure on March 20, 2020
- Remote teaching began March 30, 2020
- Return to school for some teachers and students in June 2020


Manitoba Education launched its remote teaching website, *My Learning at Home*, as a resource for students, parents and guardians. Connections to curriculum activities for each grade were provided with a focus on literacy and numeracy as well as mental and physical health.

For those students who had limited access to online learning, printed materials were provided and out-reach for at-risk students was encouraged. Teachers were asked to provide daily communication with students via telephone, online platforms, email, or regular post. For secondary students learning could include a blend of print-based or online forms, use of *InformNet* or other Department of Education web-based online courses, or print-based credit recovery modules where learning was not assessed online. The types of technologies used for teaching and learning were not specified in the announcement.

The attendance expectation for students included grades K-4 with five hours of engagement in remote teaching per week, grades 5-8 ten hours per week, and grades 9-12 a minimum of three hours per course per week. Report cards were delivered and reflected at minimum the progress of the student before March 23, 2020, however students were provided the opportunity to improve their mark. The report cards were intended to be used to assess *Recovery Learning* needs of students during the 2020-2021 school year. Under this plan of recovery learning, students with low participation during remote teaching would be offered a transition back-to-school plan with an extra focus on mental health and well-being. All provincial standardized testing was cancelled. Teachers were still expected to work a *full school day* to prepare learning opportunities for students. The decision to include a blend of synchronous and asynchronous teaching and learning was the responsibility of school divisions and school leaders.

As of June 1, 2020 under a *Limited Use of Facilities* mandate, there were opportunities provided for teachers and students to meet face-to-face for assessment and planning purposes. The document, *Welcoming Back our Students* supported this phase of limited re-opening (Manitoba Education, 2020b), however, most students still continued with remote teaching during this phase.

Saskatchewan

	<p><i>2018-19 Figures</i></p> <p>Population: 1,169,131 Number of K-12 Schools: 767 Number of K-12 Students: 184,004</p> <p>Number of K-12 Distance Learning Programs: 14 Number of K-12 Distance Learning Students: 8,378</p>
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Traditional K-12 Distance, Online, and Blended Learning Resources

While there was no provincially managed programs, there were online schools operated by 14 provincial school divisions, one independent school, and one First Nation educational authority. Prior to the 2009-10 school year, the Ministry of Education did manage three distance learning programs (i.e., print-based courses, instructional television via satellite, and online); although the status and currency of these resources and content is unknown. Since 2013-14, the Saskatchewan Technology in Education Framework has guided the use of technology in the province in the areas of teaching and learning, administrative operations and infrastructure; which has encouraged blended learning.

Remote Teaching Activity

Key Dates:


- School closure on March 20, 2020
- Remote teaching began March 30, 2020

The Ministry of Education did not mandate remote teaching during the spring of 2020 and any remote learning opportunities that teachers provided remained optional for students. The Ministry provided online resources for families that made curricular connections to health education, science, and social science all with a focus on learning about COVID-19. The Ministry also provided a resource page to support mental health and tips for remote teaching for parents and guardians. Teachers continued to create lessons to support individual students.

The types of technologies used by teachers and students were listed as a school-by-school determination and no details were given as to what types were used. School divisions were encouraged by the Ministry to use multiple modes of delivery, which included delivering packets and books if needed for those students with limited online access.

Grades for students were frozen from March 13, 2020 with the opportunity for students to improve their grade only. The mandate was to pass all students with at least a 50% grade, and no report cards were issued.

Alberta

	<p><i>2018-19 Figures</i></p> <p>Population: 4,371,316 Number of K-12 Schools: 2,266 Number of K-12 Students: 718,310</p> <p>Number of K-12 Distance Learning Programs: 33 Number of K-12 Distance Learning Students: 75,806</p>
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Traditional K-12 Distance, Online, and Blended Learning Resources

Alberta Education listed 33 different distance learning programs as a part of their online directory, and also had the highest proportion of students engaged in distance learning in 2018-19. While much of this activity was online in nature, both the Alberta Distance Learning Centre and the *Centre francophone d'éducation à distance* continued to maintain or had recent print-based course content. Additionally, over the past five years there had been an increased emphasis on blended learning (as evidenced by the introduction of the Alberta blendedED Symposium in 2015). Finally, in recent years, Alberta has released several online learning guides for various stakeholders (e.g., parents, school leaders, etc.).

Remote Teaching Activity

Key Dates:


- School closure on March 16, 2020
- Remote teaching began March 20, 2020

The province launched their *LearnAlberta* website to support remote teaching for students and parents. Additionally, within the *Continuing Student Learning* (Ministry of Education, 2020b) website several links were provided from other Albertan School Authorities. The curricular focus was on literacy and numeracy and teachers were mandated to continue evaluating student learning while focusing on learning standards that were not yet covered and those that could be covered in a manageable way.

While there were no specifications for specific digital tools used by teachers or details regarding the deployment of technology for students to access remote teaching online, accommodations included the delivery of learning packets and telephone check-ins by teachers. The Ministry did state that the expectation was that every student, “regardless of their geographic location or socioeconomic status,” would have access to remote teaching (Ministry of Education, 2020b, ¶ 1).

Attendance expectations for students outlined by the Ministry included grades K-6 to engage in five hours of remote teaching per week, grades 7-9 with 10 hours per week, and grades 10-12 with three hours per course per week. The expectation was that students would work with their parents to complete assigned work. Report cards were distributed and all provincial standardized tests were cancelled.

British Columbia

	<p><i>2018-19 Figures</i></p> <p>Population: 5,020,302 Number of K-12 Schools: 1933 Number of K-12 Students: 633,805</p> <p>Number of K-12 Distance Learning Programs: 74 Number of K-12 Distance Learning Students: ~65,000</p>
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Traditional K-12 Distance, Online, and Blended Learning Resources

Historically, British Columbia has had the highest proportion of students enrolled. In 2018-19 there were 57 district-level public distance learning schools and 16 independent distance learning schools. While most recent activity has shifted to an online delivery model, there was still extensive print-based distance education occurring. The province has also had the highest proliferation of distance learning beyond the secondary grades, with many of the schools offering services from K through 12. Finally, most of these public and independent distance learning schools also offered blended learning opportunities.

Remote Teaching Activity

Key Dates:

- School closure on March 17, 2020
- Remote teaching began March 27, 2020
- Return to school June 1, 2020

The province published the *Continuity of Learning: Planning Guide for Teachers* (Ministry of Education, 2020d), which provided guidance and links to resource sites and online webinars highlighting the use of technology tools, and the *Keep Learning BC* website which offered activities, resources, and health advice. Answers to frequently asked questions specific to both the suspension of school and the partial school start up June 1 were also posted on the existing *Safe Schools* website (Ministry of Education, 2020a).

The focus of learning was on literacy, numeracy, core competencies, and the *First Peoples Principles of Learning*⁷. Course resource materials were hosted on the Ministry's *Learning from Home* site and other materials were made available by several schools, nonprofit organizations, and companies that serviced the BC public and independent schools. The distribution of physical equipment was left to school districts, however the Ministry noted that more than 23,000


⁷ See <http://www.fnesc.ca/>

computers and devices had been loaned out to students. Finally, the Ministry suggested the use of tools such as telephone, email, *Skype*, *Zoom*, *Google Classroom*, and *Microsoft Teams* for synchronous communication.

Live sessions were favoured for K-3 students, inquiry and project-based plus live sessions for grades 4-9, and teacher-led group or individual activities for students in grades 10-12 and at a minimum teachers were required to contact each student at least weekly with more frequent contact encouraged, although attendance requirements for students were left to be determined at the local level (Ministry of Education, 2020e). Formal examinations were not required however teachers were required to provide formal weekly reports for each student with summary reports consolidated by each district and sent to the Ministry.

British Columbia began their *K-12 Education Restart Plan* on June 1 (Ministry of Education, 2020b) and in most cases a hybrid model of online and classroom learning was provided. Class sizes were reduced with K-5 students attending on alternate days (i.e., two-three days per week) and grades 6-12 attending one day per week with remote learning remaining the primary method. The exception to this were the children of essential workers, students with disabilities, and some students with diverse abilities who had the option to attend full-time. All boards were required to implement strict health and safety protocols as defined and monitored by provincial health authorities and WorkSafeBC.

Yukon

	<p><i>2018-19 Figures</i></p> <p>Population: 35,874 Number of K-12 Schools: 33 Number of K-12 Students: 5,456</p> <p>Number of K-12 Distance Education Programs: 2 Number of K-12 Distance Education Students: 170</p>
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Traditional K-12 Distance, Online, and Blended Learning Resources

Yukon Education operates both an online learning program and a blended learning program. While the online learning program is still small and development (and the territory continues to rely upon some distance learning services from programs in both British Columbia and Alberta), the blended learning program had proliferated to approximately two thirds of all schools in the territory and approximately three of out of every 20 students in grades 5-12 had engaged in blended learning.

Remote Teaching Activity

Key Dates:

- Closure of schools on March 18, 2020
- Remote teaching began April 16, 2020


The Yukon Ministry of Education added a webpage to their Ministry site that was dedicated to continuing student learning at home. This page offered resources for each grade level as well as for mental health and well-being.

For students with limited internet access, printed resources were provided. Specific considerations for First Nations students were provided by the Ministry, in partnership with local communities. A focus on *learning on the land* and land-based activities were provided. The Ministry provided educators with a *Remote Teaching & Learning Educator's Toolkit*. This resource offered information for a variety of digital tools, such as *Office 365 Teams*, *Office 365 OneNote* and *Class Notebook*, *Google Classroom*, *Moodle*, *Zoom*, *Fresh Grade*, *LinkedIn Learning*, and *Microsoft Educator Center* and *Google Teacher Center*. The Ministry provided teachers with a *Learning Continuity Toolkit* website, which offered tutorials for using these digital tools. The Ministry also acquired licences for teachers to use *LinkedIn Learning* and access *ProQuest* journal articles. Three full-days of Yukon Education Professional Development Days were recorded and uploaded by Mike Snider, a curriculum technology consultant, for

access by teachers. These sessions provided a variety of information and resources on remote teaching.

Teachers were responsible for providing students with learning materials, resources, and supports to complete the learning standards. Teachers were also required to maintain regular communication with students and families to assure learning needs were being met. Teachers assessed learning and report cards were delivered. The attendance expectation for students to engage in remote teaching included K-6 with five hours engaged in assigned work, grades 7-9 with 10 hours of assigned work, and grades 10-12 with three hours of work assigned per course per week.

Northwest Territories

	<p><i>2018-19 Figures</i></p> <p>Population: 44,826 Number of K-12 Schools: 49 Number of K-12 Students: 8,700</p> <p>Number of K-12 Distance Learning Programs: 1 Number of K-12 Distance Learning Students: 130</p>
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Traditional K-12 Distance, Online, and Blended Learning Resources

The Northwest Territories has recently concluded a three-year pilot of their Northern Distance Learning program, which saw students from approximately a third of schools participate in these online, secondary level courses. The territory also has agreements with the Alberta Distance Learning Centre and the *Centre francophone d'éducation à distance* to provide both online learning and print-based distance learning.

Remote Teaching Activity

Key Dates:


- Closure of schools on March 16, 2020
- Remote teaching began April 14, 2020

The Government of the Northwest Territories created a *Continuity of Learning* document to support teachers through planning for remote teaching and learning. This document offered a curated list of resources for each age and grade level. A government webpage offered information for parents and guardians to assist their children with remote teaching. The Yellowknife school district also provided resources for students on their website. The curricular focus was on literacy, numeracy, and health and wellness.

Students with limited access to the internet had paper-based assignments and resources, such as school supplies, journals, art supplies, and books made available to them. These assignments could be dropped off at agreed upon locations. Communication also consisted of local radio stations or telephone, and radio stations were also made available to provide lessons through story telling. This option was used as a way to connect directly with Indigenous communities. For homes with access to the internet, suggested technologies were *Google Classroom*, *Moodle*, *Facebook Live*, *GoToMeeting*, *Skype*, and *Zoom*. However there was an emphasis on learning that did not rely on internet access. This emphasis was to mitigate delays or limited connectivity of digital technologies for businesses, families, and essential service like health care across the territory.

The attendance expectation for students to engage in remote teaching included, K-3 with three hours per week, grades 4-6 with five hours per week, grades 7-9 with seven hours per week, and grades 10-12 with three hours per course per week. All achievement testing were cancelled and report cards were distributed. Each education body within the territory was left to develop a plan that responded best to the needs of students within their particular community. Teachers, parents and guardians, and students kept in communication using whatever mode was best to suit their community situation.

Nunavut

	<p><i>2018-19 Figures</i></p> <p>Population: 35,944 Number of K-12 Schools: 44 Number of K-12 Students: 10,107</p> <p>Number of K-12 Distance Learning Programs: 0 Number of K-12 Distance Learning Students: ~70</p>
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Traditional K-12 Distance, Online, and Blended Learning Resources

The territory of Nunavut did not have any internal distance, online, and/or blended learning programs. Students that learned at a distance did so through the Alberta Distance Learning Centre or Contact North in Ontario. As such, the territory did not have any existing internal capacity to support remote teaching.

Remote Teaching Activity

Key Dates:

- Closure of schools on March 17, 2020
- Remote teaching website launched March 31, 2020, but remote teaching did not begin until April 21, 2020


The Department of Education in Nunavut created their remote teaching website called *Angirrami ilnniarniq (Learning from Home)*. The *Learning from Home* website offered resources for teachers who could print and prepare packages to be sent out to students with limited internet access. On this website there were downloadable books, ebooks, audiobooks, videos, learning activities, and Inuktitut language apps made available to students.

The curricular focus was on literacy, numeracy, and health and well-being. Community and family-based learning activities, such as hunting and fishing, were encouraged, particularly if these communities and families were on the land and not able to receive at-home learning packages. Some communities, such as Pond Inlet, were closed to the community as of April 30 and students could no longer receive learning packages. Secondary students in Iqaluit, under a new practical learning program, could participate in activities such as hunting, fishing, beadwork, and snowmobile maintenance to earn credits.

Teachers were asked to check-in on families via telephone, text, or email on a weekly basis to offer students support. Reports were distributed, but they were based on progress already met

before school closure. All high school exams were cancelled, and students' progress was assessed on an individual basis for credit requirements.

Federal

	<p><i>2018-19 Figures</i></p> <p>Population: 1,400,685 Number of K-12 Schools: 489* Number of K-12 Students: ~107,000*</p> <p>Number of K-12 Distance Learning Programs: 5 Number of K-12 Distance Learning Students: ~2,000</p>
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* refers to those reporting a nominal role directly to Indigenous Services Canada

Traditional K-12 Distance, Online and Blended Learning Resources

While there were four K-12 distance/online learning programs designated as First Nations, Métis and/or Inuit programs identified as operating during the 2018-19 school year (i.e., Keewatinook Internet High School and Wahsa Distance Education Centre [Ontario], Wapaskwa Virtual Collegiate [Manitoba], and SCcyber E-learning Community [Alberta]), in each instance the program was largely focused on the First Nation(s) that operated it. As such, these programs weren't designed to necessarily provide access to online tools or content for other brick-and-mortar schools. Additionally, as each was focused on the curriculum of the province in which it was located, these programs had limited capacity to be able to provide these resources across provincial/territorial lines.

Remote Teaching Activity

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. The same will be applied for First Nations schools re-opening.

Additionally, the federal Government – through the Public Health Agency of Canada – has published general guidance for all K-12 schools.

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