



Pandemic Pedagogy in Canada: Lessons from the First 18 Months

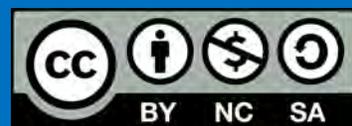
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A special report of the Canadian eLearning Network

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Previous Reports in this Series

Barbour, M. K., LaBonte, R., Kelly, K., Hodges, C., Moore, S., Lockee, B., Trust, T., Bond, A., & Hill, P. (2020). *Understanding pandemic pedagogy: Differences between emergency remote, remote, and online teaching*. Canadian eLearning Network.

While this report was published out of sequence, it was designed to be the first contribution in this series. In the spring of 2020, the term ‘emergency remote teaching’ began to emerge to describe what was occurring in education at all levels, despite the more commonly used term ‘online learning’ dominating media descriptions of the instruction offered to students forced to remain at home. This report argues the importance of avoiding equating emergency remote teaching with online learning. It is clear from most schools and teacher’s experience with emergency remote teaching that much more planning and deliberate attention be provided to teacher preparation, infrastructure, education policy, and resources to be able to maintain quality instructional continuity during a crisis. This report offers recommendations for how schools can be better prepared for future crises that incorporate both home-based and school-based learning opportunities mediated through online learning environments.

Nagle, J., Barbour, M. K., & LaBonte, R. (2020). *Documenting triage: Detailing the response of provinces and territories to emergency remote teaching*. Canadian eLearning Network.

In August 2020, the Canadian eLearning Network (CANeLearn) released a report describing how each jurisdiction managed their emergency remote teaching during Spring 2020. In the report each jurisdictional profile began with a brief summary of the online tools and online course content that were available based on existing e-learning activity, followed by a specific focus on the jurisdiction’s emergency remote teaching plan. This focus included when schools were closed and reopened (for those that did); what actions were taken; the tools, content, and devices provided, curated, and/or created; and the nature of instruction that occurred.

Nagle, J., LaBonte, R., & Barbour, M. K. (2020). *A fall like no other: Between basics and preparing for an extended transition during turmoil*. Canadian eLearning Network.

In November 2020, CANeLearn released a report describing what was announced and provided for by provincial and territorial Ministries of Education during Fall 2020. While a national view was considered, approaches varied among each jurisdiction in light of trends with the spread of the virus (often regionally within a particular jurisdiction). Some jurisdictions required students to wear masks in school buildings, others did not. Some jurisdictions announced specific plans for remote learning, others relied on existing online learning programs for students who remained at home. Finally, few jurisdictions announced or published specific plans for professional development or training for teachers new to remote learning.

Barbour, M. K., & LaBonte, R. (2020). *Stories from the field: Voices of K-12 stakeholders during pandemic*. Canadian eLearning Network.

In December 2020, CANeLearn released a report providing the stories of students, parents, school leaders, and educators. These voices provided a narrative of what actually transpired in homes, schools, communities, and districts. Students were concerned with the lack of social interaction; their parents

with their physical, emotional, wellbeing and mental health. Teachers, district and school leaders, even trustees, found the changing dynamic of the education landscape overwhelming. The report offered glimpses of success in the development of new programs and expansion of others. The stories of teachers reflected a focus on physical, social, and emotional wellbeing first, curriculum second.

Nagle, J., Barbour, M. K., & LaBonte, R. (2021). *Toggling between lockdowns: Canadian responses for continuity of learning in the 2020-21 school year*. Canadian eLearning Network.

In August 2021, CANeLearn released a report summarizing the publicly announced accommodations that were made to ensure continued pandemic schooling during the 2020-21 school year. In some instances, along with the school opening plans that were in place for Fall 2020, some jurisdictions had remote learning plans in place for the complete 2020-21 school year. In other instances, school districts and boards were left to determine individual remote learning plans with or without use of provincially or territorially provided resources. Given the lessons that could, or should, have been learned during the rapid transition to emergency remote teaching in Spring 2020, the reality was that some jurisdictions did not put in place the necessary planning or preparation to allow for uninterrupted continuation of learning.

**All of these reports can be accessed at <https://canelearn.net/home/research/projects/>
or at <https://sites.google.com/view/canelearn-ert/>**

Foreword

The current state of education in Canada might be best described as “tired.” With 18 months of a pandemic behind us, it is still uncertain as to when, or if, life will return to pre-pandemic times. (I purposely avoided the word “normal” or “new normal.”) This uncertainty has been particularly difficult for schools and educators. This is hard.

Those of us with a keen interest in online learning are watching carefully to see how provinces, territories, districts, and schools will emerge. The disruptive nature of technology has been on full display and has received mixed reviews. Many are anxiously looking to see schools adopt and improve on many of the practices that began in early 2020, others are seeking to return to a time where distance learning was either a last resort or an option for a small minority of learners.

This report offers a clear, thoughtful, and unbiased look at how every province tackled this dilemma. It’s worthwhile to compare the paths that each jurisdiction took from March of 2020 to the fall of 2021. The decisions that were made early on were largely uniform across Canada as emergency remote teaching took centre stage. Things began to diverge somewhat across the country as provinces prepared for a new school year. As outlined by the authors, Phase 2 or 3 is where we are now, depending on jurisdiction, and represents the greatest differences in various approaches to online learning.

The Canadian eLearning Network has done the hard work of collating various data and begun to plant the seeds to ask the really important questions such as:

- How did provinces arrive at the decisions around online learning for the 2021-22 school year?
- How effective was online learning in 2020-21?
- How much did teacher, student, and parent voices influence decisions?
- Have the past 18 months helped districts to create a new and better vision for online learning?

Having experienced and seen the benefits of online learning from both an instructor and working with districts across the country, Canada is well positioned to build upon their success and learn from their failure to create the best learning opportunities and environments for all learners. CANeLearn continues to provide information that is difficult to gather with reports such as this one. If you’re looking to understand the current context of online learning in Canada, this report will provide that for you. Beyond understanding, this report should lead to essential conversations and action.

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Executive Summary

This is the sixth report in a series, noted previously, that highlights the announcements, supports, and policy changes each Canadian jurisdiction made to continue to promote learning throughout the pandemic. The series is sponsored by the Canadian eLearning Network (CANeLearn), a leading voice in Canada for learner success in K-12 online and blended learning. Researchers gathered information for each province and territory through government websites, educational organizations, and current news releases that highlighted each jurisdiction's strategies to provide supports, resources, and technologies appropriate for the continuation of teaching and learning. A website was created to host the report series, along with an archive of online workshop presentations based on each report.¹

This sixth report consolidates details found in the previous reports that provided a summary of the publicly announced accommodations made to ensure continuity of learning during the pandemic from the Spring 2020 and throughout the 2020-21 school year. Data were collected by consulting various existing collections of data related to the response from various provinces and territories including important dates, learning models, and health and safety measures. Additional data were gleaned from general internet searches conducted of news releases, major news sources, and general searches which were used to corroborate or extend the above mentioned collections. The authors also made use of the existing networks that had been developed by CANeLearn, as well as the longstanding *State of the Nation: K-12 e-Learning in Canada* research project (Barbour et al., 2020a; Barbour et al., 2020b).

Following the shutdowns in Spring 2020 and emergency remote teaching, the 2020-21 school year launched with a focus on safe return to in school learning with limited attention to remote access to learning. As the year progressed, it was evident that lessons that could, or should, have been learned in Spring 2020 had not been heeded in all provinces and territories. Some jurisdictions did not put in place the necessary planning or preparation to allow the 2020-21 school year to proceed in the expected 'toggle term' fashion – as envisioned by Phase 3 of the educational response to COVID-19. While some schools remained open throughout the entire 2020-21 school year and others offered robust online learning instruction, some jurisdictions experienced province-wide school closures for up to 19 weeks, relying on remote learning that saw limited success and an inequitable learning experience for many students due in part to a lack of planning and teacher training. While many teachers in most jurisdictions were at first unprepared to transition to remote learning, during the 2020-21 school year some teachers were better positioned to provide continuity of learning than others. Several jurisdictions provided specific teacher training for remote learning and school closure, while others expanded the use of centralized e-learning programs to provide online course content and other online tools that teachers could use with their students as they learned from home.

This report goes further than previous reports, describing the face-to-face, online, remote, and hybrid learning options provided across Canada. The report offers comparison and analysis of the different learning models used in the provinces and territories and provides a glimpse at the challenges and issues beginning in the new 2021-22 school year. The report calls for additional research to further understand decisions made by governments, school boards, and schools during the pandemic, the influence of those decisions on the experiences of students and teachers, and the successes and future implications of those decisions.

¹ The website is available at <https://sites.google.com/view/canelearn-ert/>

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 distance, online, and blended learning” (para. 1). One of the ways 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 past two school years have challenged schools to provide students with learning options outside of the scope, and in numbers far beyond, traditional distance, online, and blended learning offerings.

This report consolidates the previous reports that provided a summary of the publicly announced accommodations made to ensure continuity of learning during the pandemic from the Spring 2020 and throughout the 2020-21 school year. Jurisdictional profiles in the report provide a summary of what was announced at the end of the 2019-20 school year and throughout the 2020-21 school year. Specifically, the reports provide a summary of what was found with respect to:

- the actions taken; the tools, content, and devices provided, curated, and/or created; and the nature of instruction that occurred during the Spring 2020 disruption (Nagle et al., 2020a)
- the existing e-learning resources present in the jurisdiction prior to the 2020-21 school year (Barbour et al., 2020a; 2020b)
- planning and preparation that was undertaken for the Fall 2020 re-opening (Nagle et al., 2020b)
- the specific disruptions that occurred and the nature of those disruptions; the specific learning model that was utilized during the identified disruptions; and a description of the types of support provided to hybrid and remote learning during the 2020-21 school year (Nagle et al., 2021)
- an overview of the planning and preparation that was taken for the Fall 2021 re-opening of the current school year with respect to:
 - public health factors that could impact the instructional model
 - the instructional models that were planned
 - any specific continuity of learning plans that had been prepared

This report provides an overview of pandemic pedagogical practices seen over the duration of the past 18 months, summarizing the nature of face-to-face, online, remote, and hybrid learning. Finally, the report, unlike the others preceding it, offers comparison and analysis of the different learning models used in the provinces and territories. It is hoped that the report will serve as a foundation for additional research to further understand the decisions made by governments, school boards, and schools during the pandemic, the influence of those decisions on the experiences of students and teachers, and the successes and future implications of those decisions.

Methodology

Data were collected by consulting various existing collections of data related to the response from various provinces and territories (e.g., Bogart [2020], Borden Ladner Gervais' [2020] *Canada-wide summary of COVID-19 education updates*, Wong's [2021a] *CBC News* article "What school will look like this fall as Canada struggles to bring COVID-19 under control," the People for Education's [2020-2021] *Tracking Canada's education systems' response to COVID-19*, and others). Each of these collections collated data for each jurisdiction as they released their educational guidelines at various stages from the beginning of the pandemic, throughout the 2020-21 school year, and leading into the 2021-22 school year. The data found in these collections included, but was not limited to: important dates, learning models, and health and safety measures. These collections also included links to the various Ministry of Education plans and guides, which served as primary sources for much of the information provided through this report (and particularly for the jurisdictional profiles).

Additional data were gleaned from general internet searches conducted of news releases and from major news sources for each jurisdiction, many of whom were also tracking educational initiatives for COVID-19 in schools. Many of these news sources were used to corroborate or extend the above mentioned collections, and often offered quotes from Ministers and other government officials regarding information that may not have been readily available through their Ministry's websites. Finally, general internet searches – particularly of Canadian news organizations and media outlets – were regularly conducted. The authors also made use of the existing networks that had been developed by CANeLearn, as well as the longstanding *State of the Nation: K-12 e-Learning in Canada* research project (Barbour et al., 2020a; Barbour et al., 2020b).

Pandemic Pedagogy to Date

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the term 'emergency remote teaching' emerged to describe what was occurring in education at all levels as schools shuttered their doors to in-person learning. Hodges et al. (2020) described emergency remote teaching as:

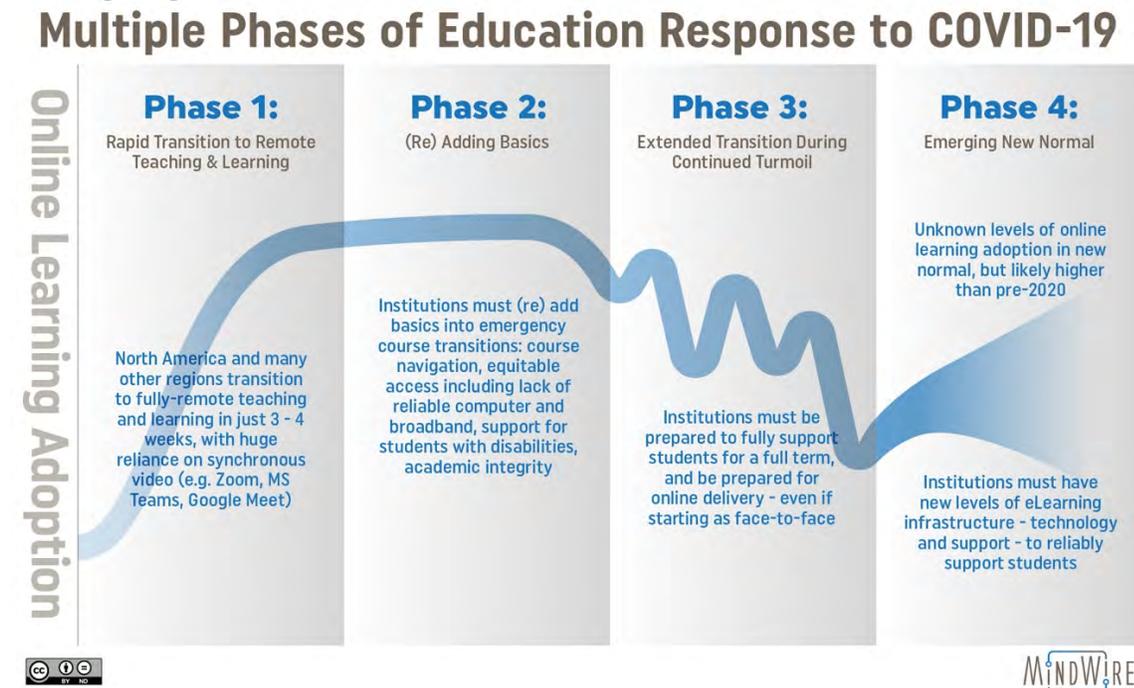
a temporary shift of instructional delivery to an alternate delivery mode due to crisis circumstances. It involves the use of fully remote teaching solutions for instruction or education that would otherwise be delivered face-to-face or as blended or hybrid courses and that will return to that format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

This was contrasted with online learning, which was based on purposeful instructional planning, and a systematic model of administrative procedures and course development. Online learning also requires the careful consideration of various pedagogical strategies combined with the purposeful selection of technology tools, and the determination of which are best suited to the specific affordances and challenges of local delivery mediums, typically lacking in the pandemic's remote teaching. Finally, careful planning for online learning also requires that

teachers be appropriately trained to use the tools available and apply them effectively to facilitate student learning.

Emergency remote teaching is the first of four phases of educator’s response to the pandemic as described by Barbour et al. (2020c) (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. *Four phases of educational response to COVID-19 in terms of remote and online learning adoption.*



Phase 1: Rapid Transition to Remote Teaching and Learning. Schools making an all hands on deck movement to remote delivery, often relying on synchronous video, with massive changes in just four weeks. Educators do whatever they can to have some educational presence for all classes online.

Phase 2: (Re) Adding Basics. Schools must (re)add basics into emergency course transitions: course navigation, equitable access addressing lack of reliable computer and broadband, support for students with disabilities, academic integrity. Schools must start to more fully address the question of quality of emergency online delivery of courses, as well as true contingency planning.

Phase 3: Extended Transition During Continued Turmoil. Schools must be prepared to support students for a full school year, and be prepared for online delivery – even if starting as face-to-face. During this phase, districts put plans in place to determine the mode of instruction based on the current realities of the pandemic. These plans should include adequate professional learning for teachers to ensure they have the skills and pedagogical knowledge to be able to implement the different instructional plans effectively.

Phase 4: Emerging New Normal. This phase will have unknown levels of online learning adoption, but it is likely that it will be higher than pre-COVID-19 days. Schools must have new levels of online learning infrastructure to reliably support students. Additionally, as teachers and students become more comfortable with learning using these tools, the chance that they will continue to use them post-pandemic increases significantly.

During the second phase, schools and teachers begin to shift focus to prescribed curriculum, incorporate suitable resources, and address equity issues (as the immediate sense of urgency has passed), but the type of distance education being provided may still be in the “emergency remote teaching” stage. Although Phase 2 may have also settled somewhat into more of a temporary ‘remote learning’ stage, because it is still assumed that remote learning would be abandoned once the crisis is over. Phase 3 is a period where schools ‘toggle’ between in person learning to remote learning as “states of lockdown and openness, depending on their sense of epidemiological data and practical feasibility” persist (Alexander, 2020, para. 32). Once again, it is remote learning – and not online learning – because it is still viewed as temporary in nature. At some point, once the crisis has passed, schools will emerge into Phase 4 where there we will be a ‘new normal’ proportion of online learning that exists within the K-12 system.

Closure in Spring 2020

Spring 2020 was the first time in modern history that all schools across any province or territory were closed for an indefinite amount of time. As Nagle et al. (2020a) reported, emergency remote teaching flourished as jurisdictions all across Canada scrambled to provide online tools, course content, and devices to all teachers to provide some modicum of continuity of learning for students when schools suddenly closed in March (see Table 1).

Table 1. *Key emergency remote teaching dates*

Jurisdiction	School closed	Remote teaching began	Year-end-status
NL	March 17	April 2	Ended early on June 5
NS	March 15	April 8	
PE	March 23	April 6	
NB	March 13	April 2	
QC	March 16	March 30	Re-opened May 11 outside Montreal
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	Re-opened June 1
YT	March 18	April 16	
NT	March 16	April 14	
NU	March 17	April 21	

The remote teaching that began during Spring 2020 was emergency remote teaching (or consistent with Phase 1 as described in Figure 1). It was an attempt to connect with students remotely to create some type of educational presence. As improvements to the learning

experience were made (e.g., digital devices distributed to students, resources published on websites, digital tools employed, and some training offered to teachers), equity of access and the quality of practice improved somewhat, this ‘remote learning’ could be described as transitioning to Phase 2 – although this transition was not consistent across all jurisdictions.

Preparation to Re-open for Fall 2020

During the summer of 2020 little public consideration was given to planning for a return to remote learning in many of the provinces and territories. The spread of COVID-19 had ‘flattened’ or begun diminishing in most jurisdictions and Ministry plans shifted to focusing on a ‘safe’ return to school buildings. This included efforts and planning focused on designing school building entries, student flow through buildings, cleaning protocols for all surfaces, setting requirements for student social distancing as well as the organization of students into cohort groups and timetables for their classes and courses. In short, little planning or preparation (e.g., teacher training, creation or expansion of digital learning spaces, investment in expansion of robust online learning programs, etc.) was provided with the focus clearly on a return to classrooms despite epidemiological modelling that pointed to continuing school closures.

As full-time distance/online learning has been available to K-12 students in most jurisdictions for some time, many education authorities provided parents/guardians the option to enroll their students in existing full-time distance, online learning opportunities (see Table 2).

Table 2. *Learning Options Planned for Fall 2020 by Jurisdiction (Nagle et al, 2020b)*

Jurisdiction	Learning Options
BC	Fully in-person learning with distance learning an option
AB	Fully in-person with distance learning an option
SK	Fully in-person; remote learning for elementary and asynchronous and for secondary, synchronous blended learning through the Online Learning Center
MB	Fully in-person; blended options for any student sick with COVID-19 or secondary students
ON	Fully in-person for grades K-8; remote for grades K-12 with either offline packages or online synchronous and asynchronous learning for grades 9-12 with asynchronous and synchronous learning
QC	Fully in-person for elementary; fully in-person or blended for secondary
NB	Fully in-person; remote paper-based for grades K-2; similar with some online technology for grades 3-5; technology-based asynchronous and synchronous for grades 6-8; blended with asynchronous and synchronous for grades 9-12
NS	Not specified
PE	Fully in-person
NL	Fully in-person instruction; remote learning for students home due to COVID-19
YT	Fully in-person for grades K-9; Fully in-person in rural areas for grades 10-12; Whitehorse area offers a blended asynchronous and synchronous approach
NT	Fully in-person for K-9; grades 10-12 can choose fully in-person or blended
NU	Fully in-person

In most cases, these distance/online learning opportunities were provided by existing providers – some of whom had a history of providing supplemental and full-time learning opportunities for over two decades. There were also instances where school boards and districts established their own distance education programs over the summer of 2020 – sometimes in partnership with an existing K-12 distance/online learning program and sometimes on their own. However, for a variety of reasons (e.g., presence of immune-compromised family members in the household, general public health concerns about the community or region, concerns about the disruption from sudden school lock-downs and/or the back and forth between in-person and remote learning, etc.), many parents/guardians decided their children would complete all of their learning at a distance online. This parental choice often overwhelmed existing distance/online learning programs who were unprepared for the level of growth that was experienced, and, for newly created district-programs, it was crushing. In both instances, the unexpected growth often resulted in a poorer quality of distance/online learning compared to previous years (e.g., larger class sizes, last minute hiring of teachers, lack of time to properly train new teachers, etc.).

While most jurisdictions allowed parents to choose between full-time distance/online learning and full-time classroom-based learning, few jurisdictions announced school opening plans for Fall 2020 that included options for hybrid forms of learning, where some students learned in school while others remained at home. Those jurisdictions that did announce plans for remote learning generally only included a description of the conditions under which schools would transition to it. In terms of how remote learning was to be operationalized, it was generally expected to be a continuation of how the 2019-20 school year ended. Further, in most cases school districts and boards were left to determine their own hybrid learning plans, including what form hybrid learning might be used. In reality, little attention was paid to Phase 3 in the model which envisioned a ‘toggle’ year shifting between in person and remote learning.

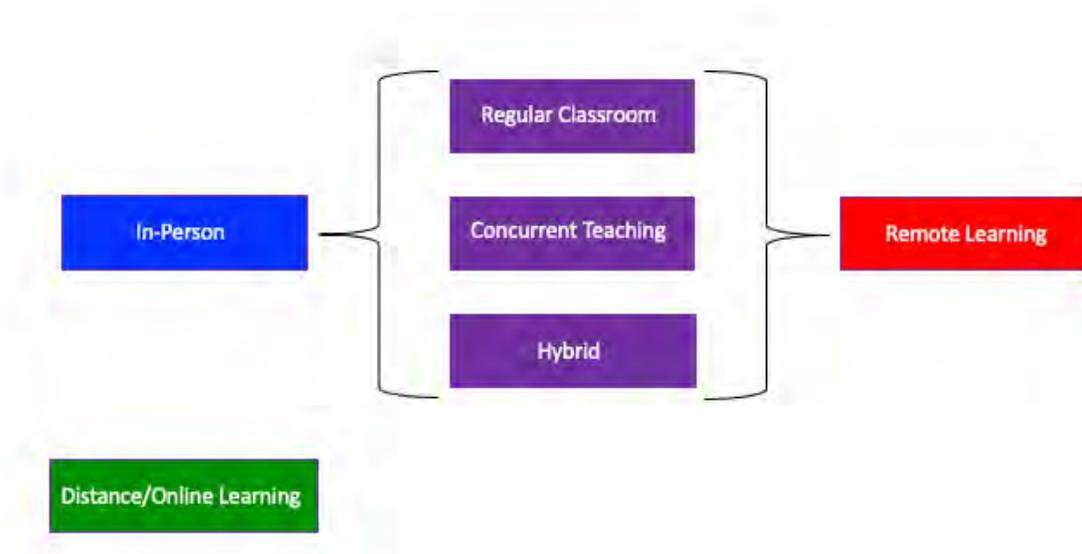
The 2020-21 School Year

While the continuing pandemic and requirement for physical distancing put restrictions on how the return to school would occur, the predominant theme and planning for most provincial and territorial government leaders remained focused on keeping schools ‘safe’ and the continuation of in-person learning. Announced efforts were focused on designing entries, flow through buildings, cleaning protocols, social distancing, and rules regarding the wearing of masks while in school buildings. To manage this, in many jurisdictions students were organized into cohort groups to minimize the number of contacts (Nagle et al, 2020b). As well, timetables for classes (e.g., school entries, recesses, class and course transitions, etc.) were planned to limit class size which did have implications for remote learning. The focus throughout most of the school year was on meeting federal and provincial/territorial health regulations and re-establishing both social and economic balance, with keeping schools open being the lynchpin. While Saskatchewan and British Columbia delayed planned school opening dates by two to five days to better prepare school buildings and protocols, Ontario was the only jurisdiction that planned a differentiated start date based on the modality of instruction. The delay for those beginning the school year in a remote learning context was twice as long or more than compared to students who began their school year in the classroom (i.e., who also had a planned delay of one week). Part of this delay was due in part to the increase in the number of parents demanding online learning at the last minute and provided time for school boards to address that demand.

As the new school year launched, it became apparent that the increase in community and school COVID outbreaks were not thoroughly planned for, despite epidemiological modelling that suggested increasing transmission with children back in school and parents at work, not to mention the increase of indoor gatherings as the weather got colder (Gillis, 2021).² Looking back, there certainly was limited teacher training in preparation for the hybrid and remote learning that was to come. It seemed the focus on getting students in school buildings took away attention to continuity of learning based on what might (or as epidemiologists warned was likely going to) happen. In retrospect, temporarily delaying school openings at the start of the school year, or after the return from planned closures (e.g., summer and/or winter holidays or spring break), to support planned teacher training might have helped improve continuity of learning during forced closures during the school year.

During the 2020-21 school year several new learning models were created that combined aspects of the different mediums to accommodate various public health measures (e.g., mask wearing, physical and social distancing, restricted class size, etc.). The measures related to physical distancing and restricted class size forced some schools to adopt learning models where students were only in the physical classroom a certain portion of time, or different groups of students were in the classroom while the rest of the students were at home and learning remotely. While in-person and distance/online learning existed before the pandemic and research had identified effective learning models, the remote learning models – as well as the hybrid learning and concurrent teaching – that emerged during the pandemic were not well known and had little or no research into their efficacy. Figure 2 provides a description of the five different learning models through which K-12 education was provided.

Figure 2. *Various learning models available during the 2020-21 school year*



² See also Appendix A in Nagle et al. (2021) for the Health Canada data from the 2020-21 school year.

In-person learning is the traditional model of learning where students are enrolled in a brick-and-mortar school and engage in their learning with teachers located at their school in a typical classroom setting.

Distance/online learning is also a traditional model of learning that has existed for the past two and a half decades where the student and teacher were geographically separated, often for one or two courses.

Hybrid learning was a model where one group of students, or a cohort, learned in-person in their classroom some of the time while another group of students were learning at home, both instructed by the same classroom-based teacher. In most instances the two cohort groups would alternate between in-person and at-home learning (e.g., one day in-person, the next day at a distance, etc.).

Concurrent teaching (a form of hybrid learning also called co-seating or co-locating) was a model where the classroom-based teacher taught some students who were in-person with the teacher in the physical classroom (i.e., ‘roomies’), and at the same time the teacher’s instruction was being streamed live through a web conferencing software to other students logged in at home (i.e., ‘zoomies’).

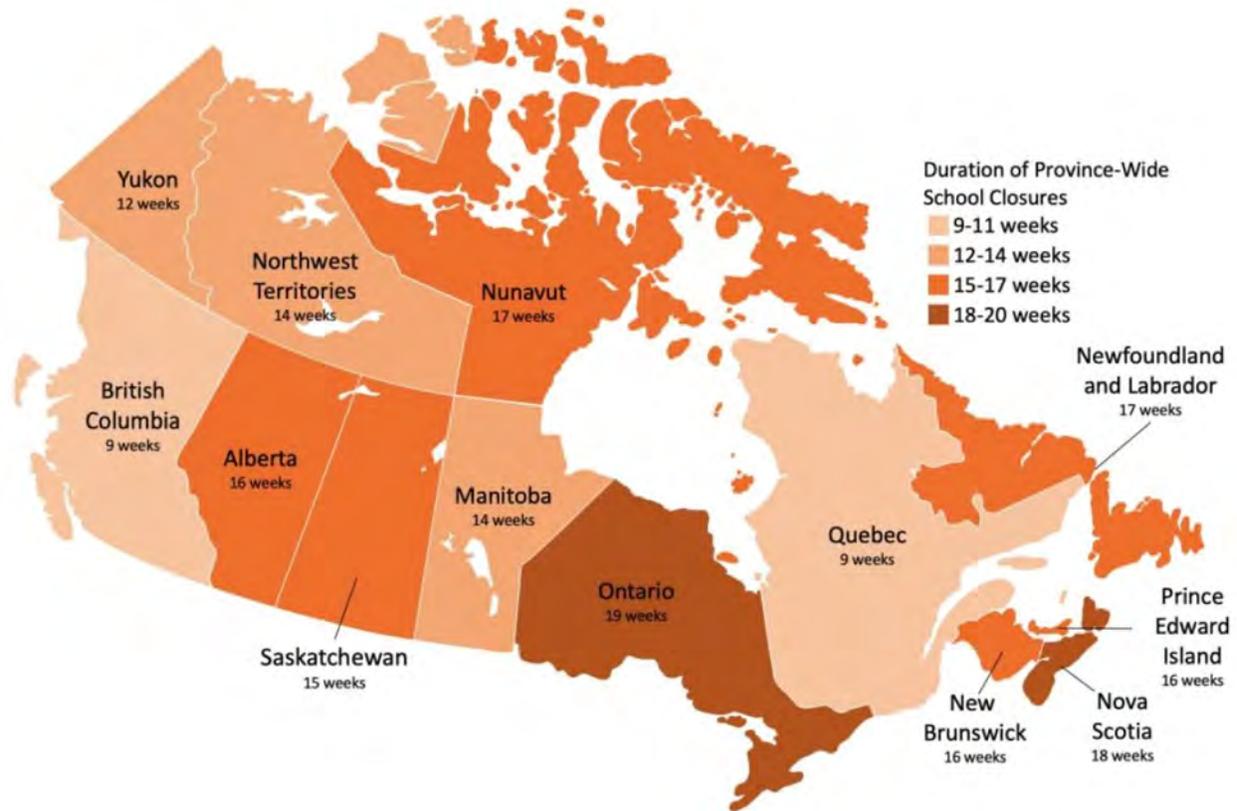
Remote learning was a model of distance/online learning designed to be temporary in nature, and was generally only used when in-person learning was not an option due to the local/regional epidemiology. (Nagle et al., 2021, pp. 5-7)

The five earlier CANeLearn reports were all designed to simply document public actions and pronouncements of various jurisdictions during these phases and were not designed to assess the educational response various governments have made during the pandemic (in fact much of the commentary about these responses in this report is provided as new perspectives on these actions and pronouncements). For example, there has not been a systematic examination of whether teachers reported to not being adequately trained to design, deliver, and support learning remotely (as there has been in the United States – see Diliberti & Kaufman, 2020 as one example). While Ministries of Health provided reports of community spread of the virus, there have been no systematic research studies into whether reopening schools increased the spread of COVID-19 (as there has been in both Europe and the United States – see Casini & Roccett, 2021; Courtemanche, 2021; Goldhaber et al., 2021; Harris et al., 2021; Riley et al., 2020 as example). Additionally, there has been no discussion of the spread of the disease in schools included in any of the previous CANeLearn reports. However, as was noted in the CANeLearn report on the 2020-21 school year (Nagle et al., 2021), that research from other jurisdictions did find that teachers were generally unprepared to engage in remote learning and that reopening of schools for in person learning did contribute to community transmission.

As was also noted in the CANeLearn report on the 2020-21 school year, jurisdictions that enacted quick, stringent, and sustained restrictions had lower case counts and death rates than jurisdictions that were slower to bring in restrictions or brought in looser restrictions (Ismail et al., 2021; Kochańczyk & Lipniacki, 2021; Larosa et al., 2020), and also had fewer restricted days overall (e.g., fewer school closures). Figure 3 provides a calculation completed by the *Ontario*

COVID-19 Science Advisory Table of the number of weeks schools were closed during the 2020-21 school year (Gallagher-Mackay et al., 2021), which is worth considering as readers reflect on the descriptions provided in *Toggling between Lockdowns: Canadian Responses for Continuity of Learning in the 2020-21 School Year* (Nagle et al., 2021).

Figure 3. *Time lost to provincewide school closures for each province or territory across Canada for the 2020-21 school year*



As noted in the figure, school closures varied among provinces and territories, but the local impact to students varied more widely than what is summarized above. For example, in British Columbia, Nova Scotia, and Quebec schools remained mostly open with only local school closures due to COVID-19 outbreaks (Subramanian, 2021). However, in Ontario province-wide lockdowns were announced January 2021 and on April 12, 2021 all provincial schools returned to remote learning and schools remained closed for the rest of the school year (Nagle et al, 2021). As COVID transmission varied in the provinces and territories, so did health regulations. This ultimately led to, and more importantly directly influenced, decisions for school lockdowns and a return to remote learning.

Toggling Toward a ‘New Normal’

As the 2020-21 school year progressed, it was evident lessons that could, or should, have been learned during the rapid transition to emergency remote teaching in Spring 2020 had not been heeded in all provinces and territories. The reality was that some jurisdictions simply did not put in place the necessary planning or preparation to allow the 2020-21 school year to proceed in the

expected ‘toggle term’ fashion – as envisioned by Phase 3 of the educational response to COVID-19 (see Figure 1 above). While some schools remained open throughout the entire 2020-21 school year and others offered robust online learning instruction, some jurisdictions experienced province-wide school closures for up to 19 weeks with limited success with remote learning due to a lack of planning and teacher training. Even those schools that remained open, often used a model of hybrid learning that boards/districts and teachers were unprepared to implement with the level of fidelity needed to ensure that students had an equitable learning experience to the in person, classroom-based context (Stewart, 2021; Wong, 2021b).

While it may be safe to say that in many jurisdictions teachers lacked the training and were unprepared to transition to remote learning, this was not the case in other jurisdictions. Some provinces and territories were potentially much better positioned to provide continuity of learning than others. For example, Nova Scotia extended their December 2020 holiday break for students by one week, and set province-wide teacher professional development during the first week of January 2021 that covered a variety of topics (including social emotional learning and technology). Further, guidelines were announced for the 2020-21 school year that established minimum hours for synchronous remote learning and asynchronous learning. The Ministry of Education also provided all teachers access to their eLearning site and distributed assistive technologies for students requiring them.

Similarly, British Columbia delayed implementing changes to its online learning programs (Government of British Columbia, 2021a) which enabled many of the 69 public and independent online schools to enroll students whose parents/guardians preferred them to learn from home (Barbour et al., 2020a). British Columbia also continued with student cohorts or ‘learning groups’ for in-school learning and for secondary students a hybrid learning model was implemented with cohort groups alternating in-school attendance and remote learning. Teachers were required to transition learning materials to a learning management system (such as *Moodle*, *Google Classroom*, or *Microsoft Teams*). As such, teachers were able to track student progress whether they were attending at school or while they were learning remotely. It is also worth noting that there were no province-wide school closures in the 2020-21 school year.

Arguably, both British Columbia’s and Nova Scotia’s provincial models could support ‘toggling’ between in-school and online/remote learning options as described in Phase 4 of Figure 1. However, it is not entirely clear to what degree that might have occurred or how effective the practices were. Some of the initial information indicated that British Columbia saw a slight increase in classroom attendance (Montreuil et al., 2021), as well as the number of students traditionally learning online (i.e., approximately 10 percent of the student population), but also found large gaps and decreases in both attendance and achievement for Indigenous students.

Preparation to Open for Fall 2021

It is important to remember that at the time each of these jurisdictions were determining and/or adjusting their plans for K-12 education, it was against the backdrop of the status of the pandemic in their individual province or territory. Health Canada (2021) began presenting the number of active COVID-19 cases in graphical format on their website in late July 2020. Table A-1, as well as Figures A-1 through A-4, in Appendix A indicate the number of active cases in

each jurisdiction across Canada on the first day of June, July, August, and September for each province and territory. This data is not presented to parse trends with regard to infection rates throughout the Summer 2021 planning period, or to suggest specific differences between the provinces and territories. However, as the active case rate would have been an important factor influencing each jurisdictions’ plans and actions, it is important that the reader have ready access to this data.

As one example, it was against the backdrop of these active case rates during the summer 2021, as well as the active case rates throughout the 2020-21 school year (see Appendix A in Nagle et al, 2021), that provinces and territories made the public health decisions described in Table 3 that could impact the instructional model during the 2021-22 school year.

Table 3. *Factors impacting the instructional model*

Jurisdiction	Vaccine	Masks	Distancing	Cohorts	Class Size	Activities
BC	None	Required for grade 4 and up	Not required			Can resume
AB	None	Not required	Not required			Can resume
SK	None	Required for unvaccinated	Not required	None		
MB	None	Indoors	Where possible	K-6		Follow public health guidelines
ON	None	Required	Where possible	None		Can resume
QC	None	Not required	Not required	None		Can resume
NB	None	Required		None		“Greater freedom”
NS	None	Required	Required	None	Not specified	Can resume
PE	None	Recommended				Follow public health guidelines
NL	None	Not required	Not required	None	Not specified	Can resume
YT	None	Required	Required	None		Can resume
NT	None	Required	Required K-6	Recommended		On hold
NU	None	Up to local public health officials	Where possible	Recommended		On hold

Based on the active COVID-19 cases, some jurisdictions were banking on limited spread of the virus in schools. This hope was based on data from the last school year, which may not have

factored in viral variant spread in the student population (i.e., the largest pool of the unvaccinated). The pressure was on for swift vaccination to counter further disruption, yet at the time of publication some schools across the country were closing (CBC News 2021a; Moore, 2021; Watson, 2021).

Even with a more relaxed approach to public health precautions, Table 5 illustrates that most jurisdictions still did not make systematic preparations for hybrid learning or remote learning (beyond what was experienced during the Spring 2020 or the 2020-21 school year).

Table 4. *Fall 2021 Learning Options by Jurisdiction*

Jurisdiction	Learning Options
BC	Full in-person instruction; with distance learning an option
AB	Full in-person instruction
SK	Full in-person instruction; additionally secondary students will be able to obtain credits through a variety of educational avenues
MB	Full in-person instruction; remote learning available for students who are immunocompromised
ON	Full in-person instruction; remote learning required based on Policy/Program Memorandum No. 164
QC	Full in-person instruction
NB	Fully in-person instruction, but policies may be adjusted depending on epidemiology
PE	Full in-person instruction, but policies will be adjusted depending on level of risk; remote learning available to high risk students
NS	Full in-person instruction, but policies may be adjusted depending on epidemiology
NL	Full in-person instruction; remote learning for students who cannot attend due to medical reasons
YT	Full in-person instruction; supports, tools, and training available for blended learning and remote learning
NT	Full in-person instruction; remote learning is available for students with medical concerns
NU	Full in-person instruction (unless advise by public health officials)

Both Table 3 and 4 demonstrate a pattern for the continuation of putting all efforts and focus to in-person instruction, again with minimal focus on preparing for a ‘toggle’ described in Phase 3 in Figure 1. Indeed, with continuing disruptions and school closures, such as the October public employee’s strike in New Brunswick (Brown & April, 2021), the argument could be made that few jurisdictions are even thinking about a ‘new normal’ and the ability to actually pivot swiftly between in school and remote learning with limited impact on student engagement and learning. In Ontario, in the government’s guide to reopening schools (Davidson, 2021), school boards were required to consider remote learning when schools closed due to inclement weather. The need to effectively plan for and train teachers for a model of ‘togglng’ between in school and remote could not be more clear.

There are several specific examples in the Fall 2021 that are worth noting that could be examples of a move to supporting the ‘toggle’. For example, British Columbia continued to delay the implementation of changes to its online learning programs (Government of British Columbia, 2021a) which enabled many of the 69 public and independent online schools to enroll students whose parents/guardians preferred them to learn from home (Barbour et al., 2020a). In Nova Scotia when the new school year launched, 75 percent of parents surveyed reported having reliable bandwidth in their homes based on improvements made the year before, and, coupled with a clear direction to upskill teachers with the one-week province-wide teacher training in January 2021 and the provincial online tools and curriculum resources provided to all teachers, Nova Scotia arguably also had the ability to ‘toggle’ and adapt to changing circumstances as described in Phase 4.

In stark contrast, in Ontario the concurrent teaching model – where classroom-based teachers teach students in the classroom and simultaneously to remote students logged into web conferencing software that live streams the classroom – began emerging during the 2020-21 school year. It was dubbed as ‘hybrid learning,’ but as discussed earlier the Ontario model was the concurrent teaching model of hybrid.³ This ‘live’ broadcast teaching model with students in the classroom and others logging in by video remotely was planned for by many boards after the Ministry of Education announced that all school boards in the province would offer a remote learning option during the 2021-22 school year (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2021; C. Wilson, 2021). While many boards already offered optional online learning programs that were quickly doubling in size, some boards were unable to offer an online program that covered the full curriculum (King, 2021; Simcoe County District School Board, 2021). Further, many school boards lacked the necessary funding to create or offer an online or remote learning program (Wong, 2021b). In essence, the concurrent teaching or hybrid learning model was the only way that many school boards were able to meet the Ministry’s remote learning policy requirement that was within the board’s financial means. Even before the start of the new school year, the model had fallen under criticism (Stewart, 2021) and recently teachers unions are speaking out about its negative impact on both teachers and student learning (Fox, 2021a).

There were some jurisdictions who provided good detail and direction in their announced plans at the start of the 2021-22 school year. Interestingly, both Nunavut and the Yukon are examples of jurisdictions where the Ministry plans were detailed and descriptive, but more importantly outlined a variety of instructional options to accommodate all possibilities associated with a realistic understanding of the toggle nature of the 2021-22 school year. For example, Nunavut has a 35-page document that outlines a variety of strategies to prevent the introduction of COVID-19 into schools, how to respond when COVID-19 is detected in the school, how to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 once it is present, and how to address potential learning disruption to individual student’s, complete classes, or complete schools (Nunavut Department of Education, 2021a). Further, recognizing that the 2019-20 and 2020-21 school years were both disrupted and that unequal levels of learning may have occurred, the Nunavut Department of Education (2021b) released *Learning to Be Together Again Support for Nunavut Schools in 2021-22*, which began with a focus on ‘recovery learning,’ or the “responsive process that enables students to transition back to in-class learning, while addressing mental and physical

³ For a detailed discussion of various hybrid student arrangements and configurations in the United State, see Arnett (2021).

well-being and student achievement” (p. 5). The goals of recovery learning are to determine where students are in their understanding and then to offer students flexible avenues to help them achieve where they need to be. In addition to the recovery learning aspects, the document also focused on how to incorporate blended learning and remote learning – depending on the local epidemiology.

Similarly, the Yukon (2021a) in their *School during COVID-19: Guidelines for the 2021–22 School Year* provided clear guidelines for “What school looks like for ALL students” and “What school looks like at individual schools” in the case of 100%, 50%, 20% and 0% school capacity. Essentially, there were detailed descriptions for the public health measures in place for in-person learning, how schools would operate and learning would occur when there was a need for hybrid learning with half capacity and very low capacity, and then the planning needed for remote learning to occur. Additionally, even when there was no disruption, the document outlined measures that would be undertaken to incorporate more blended learning into the classroom, which it was argued would make hybrid learning and remote learning less of an adjustment. These types of plans were much more realistic in terms of how the 2021-22 school year was likely to progress, as compared to the perspective that “students must return to class... barring ‘only the most catastrophic of circumstances’” (CBC News, 2021b, para. 1).

Opening Days of the 2021-22 School Year

At the start of the 2021-22 school year, the concurrent teaching variation of the hybrid learning model quickly came under criticism after it was announced as an option for the coming school year in Ontario. As a reminder, the concurrent teaching model is one where the teacher manages instruction and student learning for children that arrive to their classroom, while simultaneously streaming that instruction to children who are forced or choose to remain at home and connect to the room remotely. Stewart (2021) suggested that the “relationships teachers build and support in their classrooms... are integral to children’s engagement, learning and wellness [and that a] hybrid model disrupts those practices, and encourages a default to simple, slowed-down, teacher-led approaches” (para. 13-14). This, according to Stewart, reduced the quality of the education received by students both in the classroom and online. This criticism was echoed in the voices of students who were concerned that teachers were preoccupied with technology and processes to try and connect the two groups of students to the classroom, as one chemistry teacher trying to demonstrate an experiment and had “five screens up, two mice and two keyboards — and it takes her half an hour to set it up., class time that we could be using to be learning chemistry” (Wong, 2021c, para. 5). Teachers as well expressed significant concerns about the concurrent teaching model as one teacher explains:

before classes start, he must also connect all his online ‘production’ gear, which includes computers, a web cam and a tablet. Then, if he suddenly loses connectivity to his learners at home, he has to quickly troubleshoot. “Meanwhile, the kids in-class? I have to keep them engaged and occupied,” Bradshaw said. “It’s really the job of at least two people, maybe three people, if you consider the tech support that’s involved. But you have to try and do it on your own.” (para. 25-27).

None of the plans announced by Ontario prior to the start of the 2021-22 school year offered support, or even envisioned, the hybrid and concurrent models that are currently being used.

While the focus of this report – and the jurisdictional profiles that follow – are about the planning and preparation that occurred during the summer 2021, this report is being published during the first week of November it does allow for some evaluation of how ready different jurisdictions actually were. As described above, the preliminary feedback on the concurrent teaching model underway in Ontario does not bode well on its ability to transition into the Phase 4 or the ‘Emerging New Normal.’ Yet, the actions during the 2020-21 school year in both British Columbia and Nova Scotia showed encouraging signs towards this transition. More study is certainly called for and required across the country.

Given the epidemiological realities of the pandemic, anyone approaching the situation from a realistic perspective understands that the 2021-22 school year will be another year of toggling between various states of in-person and remote learning. With only two months into the current school year, we have already seen school closures and the need for remote learning due local and regional outbreaks from Newfoundland and Labrador to British Columbia to the Northwest Territories (CBC News 2021a; Moore, 2021; Watson, 2021) – and everywhere in between (CBC News 2021c; CBC News 2021d; CBC News 2021e; The Canadian Press, 2021). It is hoped that some of the differences in policy and practice that emerged throughout the 2020-21 school year, and even those announced at the start of this new school year, will become guides for politicians and policymakers across the country as schools continue to grapple with the demands of another toggle school year.

However, it is also important for politicians and policymakers – as well as practitioners – to continue to keep an eye on the emerging new normal. While much of the remote learning provided over the past 18 months has been poorly supported and executed, there have been groups that have benefitted from learning in an online setting (Collins-Nelsen et al., 2021; Fernando, 2021; Miller, 2021). When parents/guardians are free to choose between in-person or online learning (or some combination of the two) without concern about their child’s health, what will the K-12 distance, online, and blended learning landscape look like? How will the remote learning lessons of the pandemic inform policy and practice in the future? What will politicians and policymakers take away from the past 18 months to guide short-term and long-term school closures during the next disaster? These questions highlight the need to continue this line of inquiry, as well as future research under consideration by CANeLearn.

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

Newfoundland and Labrador

	<p><i>2019-20 Figures</i></p> <p>Population: 522,994 Number of K-12 Schools: 260 Number of K-12 Students: 63,722</p> <p>Number of Formal K-12 E-Learning Programs: 1 Number of Formal K-12 E-Learning: 1,092</p>
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Spring 2020 Closure

Schools in Newfoundland closed on March 17, 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 as a resource for students and parents during the remote teaching that began on April 2, 2020. While students and teachers used a variety of *Google* tools, there were no specified expectations for attendance or requirements for synchronous or asynchronous learning – although teachers were required to check in with students weekly. The NLESD did provide some technology and internet access, as well as non-digital learning packages. The school year ended early on June 5, 2020, and, with the cancellation of public exams, report card grades reflected work assessed before the school closure.

Existing E-Learning Resources Prior to 2020-21 School Year

The Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation (CDLI), a division of the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District and funded directly the Ministry of Education, was the sole provider of K-12 distance education in the province. The CDLI had created asynchronous content for 45 courses (mostly at the high school level) and allowed any provincial educator (i.e., including classroom teachers) to register in their learning management system and use the CDLI's asynchronous course materials with their students.

Fall 2020 Reopening

The 2020-21 school year began with in-person learning under near-normal conditions. Public health measures included cohort groupings, physical distancing (i.e., two meters), and, due to the limitations of physical distancing in classrooms, signage to control the flow of student traffic. Additionally, to limit student movement schools had subject-specific teachers transition between classrooms and students remained in a single room. Masks were only mandatory where physical distancing was not possible. Virtual learning that included the provision of technology and connectivity remained an option for students who needed to learn at home. Public examinations were cancelled, but all other provincial exams were planned to be administered. There were no publicly announced plans for hybrid or remote learning.

2020-21 School Year

Schools were open to in-person learning until February 18, 2021, when provincial schools returned to remote learning due to an increased spike in COVID-19 cases. The instructional model included a mandatory minimum three-hour day for kindergarten to grade 3, 90-minutes per day for grades 4-6, and a full day for grades 7-12 using a combination of *Google* tools. However, the NELSD was delayed in providing digital devices and connectivity in some instances. Around mid-April, most high schools in at-risk regions implemented a learning model that had students spending a portion of their time learning in person at school and the remainder of their time learning at home through a streamed feed of the live classroom instruction.

Fall 2021 Reopening

Factors impacting the instructional model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No mandatory vaccination requirements • Masking not mandatory in schools or on buses unless the risk level changes • Cohorts not required • Physical distancing not required • Co-curricular and extracurricular activities can resume • Events and gatherings can resume for grades 7 to 12, virtual options recommended for K-6
Instructional models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools return to full-time in-person learning, but policies will be adjusted depending on level of risk • Remote learning available only for students who cannot attend due to medical reasons
Continuity of learning plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District offers various levels of professional learning for teachers in the use of digital tools (e.g., Google Docs/Meet/Classroom) for online learning • Priority is for in person instruction for all K-6 students, to the extent possible, and 100% in person instruction for students with exceptionalities and/or who require additional supports • At moderate risk, scenario 2 or blended is implemented with 50% in person instruction and 50% learning at home • At high risk, scenario 3 or at-home learning is implemented

All schools opened to in-person learning for the 2021-22 school year with a ‘low-risk transmission’ or ‘scenario 1’ designation, which included ‘near-normal health measures’ and relaxed requirements for physical distancing and cohorts (Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education, 2021; Newfoundland and Labrador English School District, 2021a). However, if the pandemic conditions changed schools could be determined as ‘high-risk transmission’ or ‘scenario 2 or 3,’ and stricter health restrictions would again be implemented. In scenario 2, blended or hybrid learning would begin, with a staggered schedule of in-person and remote learning. Scenario 3 would include fully remote learning. For fully remote learning, a sample schedule was released by the English School District which outlined the requirements for both synchronous and asynchronous learning activities. Students who needed digital devices were able to receive a Chromebook on loan from their school district (Newfoundland &

Labrador English School District, 2021b). For the school year, fully remote learning was under scenario 1 was only offered to students with medical exemptions only (People for Education, 2021). Should caregivers choose to keep their child home, they needed to apply to home school their child. Sports, assemblies, and extra-curricular activities resumed (Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education, 2021).

As the Department of Education wanted teachers to focus on trauma-informed education, they offered professional learning resources for teachers as part of a Professional Learning Series. The Department of Education also continued to offer professional resources for teachers for using technology, such as *Google Docs*, *Google Meet*, and *Google Classroom* (Newfoundland and Labrador English School District, 2021a).

Nova Scotia

	<p><i>2019-20 Figures</i></p> <p>Population: 971,395 Number of K-12 Schools: 371 Number of K-12 Students: 123,239</p> <p>Number of Formal K-12 E-Learning Programs: 2 Number of Formal K-12 E-Learning Students: ~106,627</p>
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Spring 2020 Closure

Schools in Nova Scotia closed on March 15, 2020. The Ministry of Education and Early Childhood Development provided literacy, numeracy, and mental health resources for students, parents, and guardians. Additionally, five learning packages were provided between April 8 and June 3, 2020. *Google Classroom* and *Learn360* platforms were used to connect with students, share content, and assess learning. Chromebooks were distributed to students and those with no or limited internet were provided with learning packages via a province-wide newspaper. Attendance expectations for remote learning were five hours per week for kindergarten to grade 6, ten hours for grades 7-9, and three hours per course per week for grades 10-12. All provincial standardized tests were cancelled and final grades issued on report cards were based on work assigned and completed.

Existing E-Learning Resources Prior to 2020-21 School Year

There were two distance education programs in the province. The Nova Scotia Virtual School (NSVS) provided online courses for the seven English-speaking regional centres and the *Conseil scolaire acadien provincial* for the French. The correspondence studies program provided print-based courses (i.e., transition to an online delivery format is ongoing) for adult students, home-schooled students, and students living outside of Nova Scotia. Beginning in 2015, the *Nova Scotia Action Plan for Education* made additional commitments to the growth of online and blended learning by providing classroom students and teachers with access to NSVS courses and online learning opportunities for middle school students to prepare them for online courses in high school.

Fall 2020 Reopening

The Fall 2020-21 school year began without delays with a full reopening that included health measures that included cohort groupings, physical distancing, and outdoor classes used as much as possible, a reconfiguration of classroom space, and signage to regulate student movement. No large school gatherings (i.e., assemblies and cafeterias) were permitted. Masks were mandatory for grades 4-12. Diagnostic assessments were planned for the start of the year to gauge student learning and to assist teachers to better understand the learning needs of their students, but provincial assessments were cancelled.

2020-21 School Year

Schools were open to in-person learning until April 28, 2021, when schools closed due to rising COVID-19 cases. On May 19th the province decided to keep schools closed for the rest of the year, but in-school learning began again for some areas starting June 3. The remote learning instructional model was a mix of asynchronous and synchronous with a minimum set of one hour synchronous and two hours asynchronous for kindergarten to grade 3 per day, increasing by 30-minute increments for each of grades 4-6 and 7-9. For grades 10-12, there was up to 50% of their school day as synchronous. All assessments and reporting continued as per a regular school year and teachers had access to an eLearning site developed by the Nova Scotia Government. Students who needed assistive technology were provided with devices with a priority given to marginalized and racialized communities. Students without internet access were offered other options such as the delivery of learning materials on a memory drive.

Fall 2021 Reopening

Factors impacting the instructional model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No mandatory vaccination requirements • Masking is required (except for physical activity) • Cohorts not required • Physical distancing required • Co-curricular and extracurricular activities can resume
Instructional models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools return to full-time in-person learning, but policies may be adjusted depending on epidemiology
Continuity of learning plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry stresses the importance for educators to incorporate technology regularly to prepare for remote learning • Remote learning will use similar procedures from the 2020-21 school year

All public schools returned to in-person learning for the 2021-22 school year, with full capacity class sizes and no cohort grouping (People for Education, 2021). In the case of rising COVID-19 cases, schools would return to ‘at-home’ learning using a similar approach as last school year” (Gorman, 2021). Extracurricular activities, school assemblies, and music continued as normal, with an emphasis on learning outdoors as much as possible. Should the return to remote learning occur, the Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (2021a) recommended that teachers already be incorporating technology into their daily lesson planning to ease any transition; and students who needed technology would be provided devices. Remote learning would consist of a blend of synchronous and asynchronous learning, with the amount dependant on grade level. For example, the pre-primary grade packages would focus on play-based learning materials; primary to grade 3 would include two hours of work per day with one hour online; grades 4-6 would include three hours of work daily with one and half hours online; grades 7-9 would include four hours of work daily with two hours online; and grades 10-12 would have 50% of their time online. Reporting and provincial assessments would continue (Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2021b).

Prince Edward Island

	<p><i>2019-20 Figures</i></p> <p>Population: 159,249 Number of K-12 Schools: 63 Number of K-12 Students: 20,131</p> <p>Number of Formal K-12 E-Learning Programs: 0 Number of Formal K-12 E-Learning Students: 133</p>
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Spring 2020 Closure

Schools on Prince Edward Island closed on March 23, 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. Educational activities for students were posted on websites and printed resources were offered to students with limited access to the internet. Attendance for remote teaching included kindergarten with 30 minutes per day of holistic learning, primary 45 minutes per day, elementary 60 minutes, intermediate 90 minutes per day, and secondary grades 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.

Existing E-Learning Resources Prior to 2020-21 School Year

There were no K-12 distance education programs in Prince Edward Island and there were no intentional blended learning (i.e., specific projects or initiatives) occurring in public schools. Through an inter-provincial agreement students in Prince Edward Island were funded to take online courses from the New Brunswick Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

Fall 2020 Reopening

There were no delays to the start of the Fall 2020-21 school year with a full re-opening and added health measures that included cohorts, physical distancing, staggered entry/exits and student breaks, signage to direct the flow of student traffic. Masks were mandatory for grades 7-12 and voluntary for grades K-6. The curriculum was revised to address learning gaps and outcomes that could not be addressed in the Spring while schools were closed and learning assessments were planned to continue as usual with priority on missed outcomes for language arts and math.

2020-21 School Year

Schools were open to in-person learning throughout the 2020-21 school year, however, some schools closed based on case numbers, and at the beginning of May there was a province-wide lockdown with schools closed, however, in-school learning returned May 9. Students who could not attend in-school learning due to illness or self-isolation were expected to complete online and offline work prepared by their teacher. Expectations for synchronous and asynchronous learning included 60-80 minutes daily for kindergarten, two and one-half hours per day for grades 1-6, and in grades 7-12 class time remained the same as during a regular school day. The province adopted *Google Classroom* as its provincial learning management system and devices were delivered to students in need. Assessment and reporting continued as per a regular school year, but provincial assessments were cancelled for the 2020-21 school year.

Fall 2021 Reopening

Factors impacting the instructional model	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No mandatory vaccination requirements• Masking is recommended• Co-curricular and extracurricular activities should follow public health guidelines
Instructional models	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Schools return to full-time in-person learning, but policies will be adjusted depending on level of risk• Remote learning available to high risk students
Continuity of learning plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Schools should implement plans similar to 2020-21

All schools began the 2021-22 school year in-school with ‘low-risk’ measures that included health and safety precautions (e.g., masks, physical distancing, and cohorts). Assemblies, extra-curricular activities, and sports also continued. If cases of COVID-19 rise, a ‘high-risk’ or ‘elevated risk’ approach would be implemented with greater health and safety precautions (Prince Edward Island Department of Education and Lifelong Learning, 2021a). Should remote learning resume, the platform used across the province would be *Google Classroom* and/or *Google Sites*, and would include a blend of synchronous and asynchronous learning time. Should both a teacher and students need to isolate, remote learning will be taught by the classroom teacher, while a substitute teacher would be in the classroom with the students who did not have to isolate. If all children within a class or a school were remote, the expectations for remote learning would include: Kindergarten will have 60-80 minutes of instruction per day in increments of 15-20 minutes at a time; for grades 1-6 would have two and a half hours per day; for grades 7-12 would follow their regular class schedules. ‘Considerations and support’ are offered to students with limited access to the internet or learning devices (Prince Edward Island Department of Lifelong learning, 2021b).

Curriculum focused on a ‘transitional’ plan where necessary to include revised curriculum from the 2020-21 school year. Other instances pre-pandemic curriculum would be covered (Prince Edward Island Department of Education, 2021c). Assessments and reporting would continue.

New Brunswick

	<p><i>2019-20 Figures</i></p> <p>Population: 781,024 Number of K-12 Schools: 307 Number of K-12 Students: 98,906</p> <p>Number of Formal K-12 E-Learning Programs: 2 Number of Formal K-12 E-Learning Students: ~12,000</p>
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Spring 2020 Closure

Schools in New Brunswick closed on March 13, 2020. The Department of Education launched their *Learning at Home* website for remote teaching support offering literacy, numeracy, and mental and physical health resources. Specific course materials for science, social science, history, technology, second language supports were posted for most grades. The technologies and digital tools to support remote learning were not specified, but devices such as 1,000 iPads, 500 laptops, and 300 mobile internet hubs were loaned to students. The expected attendance for remote learning was five hours per week for grades K-5, ten hours for grades 6-8, and 12.5 hours for grades 9-12. Students were also encouraged to spend at least 30 minutes per day engaged in physical activity. Final report cards were suspended and provincial standardized testing was cancelled. Between June 1-5, teachers were back in schools to complete school closing requirements and to start planning for the fall while students continued with remote learning.

Existing E-Learning Resources Prior to 2020-21 School Year

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development managed two distance learning programs that serviced secondary students in New Brunswick in either of the province's two official languages. There were approximately 55 courses in the Anglophone program and 28 in the Francophone program. The content for all of the distance learning courses was available to all teachers in the province to use as online courses in a more blended learning model under the direction of their local school's classroom teachers.

Fall 2020 Reopening

Elementary schools created cohort groupings or 'bubbles' for their students. In grades K-2, class sizes were a maximum of 15 students, in grades 3-5 a maximum of 22 students, and in grades 6-8 there were regular class sizes. Cohort groups in secondary students had alternate schedules for in-school attendance and in-home remote learning as well as staggered breaks between classes to maintain physical distancing. Masks were recommended in the classroom, but not required, however secondary students were required to mask when outside the classroom. Technology and resources, both paper and digital, were provided and most remote learning was asynchronous with regular live online teaching for grades 6-8. A blended model of learning for secondary students was announced by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development that relied on project-based and experiential learning opportunities.

2020-21 School Year

Schools were mostly open throughout the 2020-21 school year but shifted to remote learning based on areas of risk within specific communities and regions. During “orange and yellow zone” alerts, only students at-risk were shifted to remote learning, but during “red zone” alerts, high school students moved to the blended learning model. Absences throughout the K-12 system were high during red zone alerts, as remote learning was no longer mandated under this level of alert. Teachers were responsible for continued child learning if they needed to remain at home, and were asked to maintain a balance between synchronous and asynchronous learning to minimize screen time. Students were responsible for their own devices, but if in need, families could apply to the ‘Laptop Assistance Program’ to obtain any needed devices for their child’s learning.

Fall 2021 Reopening

Factors impacting the instructional model	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No mandatory vaccination requirements• Masking is required• Cohorts not required• Undefined “greater freedom” for co-curricular and extracurricular activities• Assemblies and concerts can resume for grades 9 to 12, virtual options recommended for K-8
Instructional models	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Schools return to full-time in-person learning, but policies may be adjusted depending on epidemiology
Continuity of learning plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teachers expected to “organize and mobilize full-time distance learning”

Schools returned to in-person learning for the 2021-22 school year. Class size returned to full capacity for K-5 with no ‘bubbles’ or cohorting in grades 6-8. High school students returned with full time, in-person attendance, and music programs and extracurricular activities continued without restrictions, though assemblies were still not permitted. (New Brunswick Department of Early Childhood Education and Development, 2021).

However, some schools offered virtual learning for students of caregivers who chose to keep them at home. For example, Riverbend Community School offered virtual learning for students in grades 1-5 where students were engaged in learning from 8:30 am to noon on Monday through Thursday (Bonang, 2021). In this program, students were given individual learning plans by a teacher, but this option also included what can be considered a hybrid model described as “an inclusive approach that will allow students learning from home daily interaction with kids still in the classroom” (para. 13).

Should students return to remote learning due to an outbreak, K-8 students would engage in a mix of ‘virtual and paper-based learning’ or learning kits, while high school students would have a blend of synchronous and project-based learning (New Brunswick Department of Early Childhood Education and Development, 2021).

Quebec

	<p><i>2019-20 Figures</i></p> <p>Population: 8,572,054 Number of K-12 Schools: 3,102 Number of K-12 Students: 1,003,322</p> <p>Number of Formal K-12 E-Learning Programs: 5+ Number of Formal K-12 E-Learning Students: ~55,000+</p>
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Spring 2020 Closure

Schools in Quebec closed on March 16, 2020. The Ministry of Education launched their remote teaching website, *Open School/L'École Ouverte*, as a resource for students, parents, and guardians. The curricular focus was on literacy, numeracy, the arts, and physical and mental health. Education kits were available to students who had limited access to the internet. Anglophone teachers were offered professional learning through the LEARN website and the site offered teachers access to webinars. 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. On May 11 there was a non-compulsory return to school (with the exception of the Montreal area, which remained closed) but secondary students continued with remote learning.

Existing E-Learning Resources Prior to 2020-21 School Year

The largest distance education program was provided by the *Société de formation à distance des commissions scolaires du Québec* (SOFAD), comprised of correspondence distance learning materials which primarily serve adult learners. School boards could use the French learning materials in their own district-based programs. The Leading English Education and Resource Network (LEARN) provided a variety of distance learning opportunities, as well as services and resources (e.g., tutoring, tailored pedagogical content, training, community learning centres' support, curated resources, and enrichment activities), to all nine English-speaking school boards in the province.

Fall 2020 Reopening

There were no delays to the start of the 2020-21 school year with all students attending in-person learning. Enhanced health measures included cohort groups while students remained in the same classroom and teachers moved for subject-specific teaching. Masks were mandatory for grades 5-12 but not required to be worn in an elementary classroom. The curriculum included an added focus on assisting students to identify learning gaps from the Spring.

2020-21 School Year

Much of the 2020-21 school year proceeded with in-person learning, but on Dec. 17, 2020, all provincial schools closed and resumed ‘virtual teaching’. Regular classes resumed after the winter holiday for elementary students, but secondary students continued virtual learning for one more week and opened on Jan. 11, 2021. The province did not issue a province-wide shutdown of schools, instead, school closures were on a region by region basis. Only children who were at-risk medically were allowed to continue with full-time distance education. Boards were required to offer LTE devices to students to access the internet and each school prepared emergency protocols that included educational services during distance learning and managed them ‘locally.’ The only alternative for parents who wished their children not to attend in-school learning was to remove them from their school and homeschool.

Fall 2021 Reopening

Factors impacting the instructional model	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No mandatory vaccination requirements• Masking is not required in green zone regions, otherwise required• Cohorts not required• Physical distancing not required• Co-curricular and extracurricular activities can resume, but vaccine passport required at the secondary school level
Instructional models	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “100% of students are attending classes in person on a full-time basis”
Continuity of learning plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No specific plans outlined for how remote learning should be undertaken if/when a school or board is forced to close

Québec schools returned to in-person learning for the 2021-22 school year. To ‘avoid’ online learning, masks in schools was made mandatory (Global News, 2021). Students with medical exemptions in the six English school boards were allowed the option to attend remote learning via LEARN Québec – a distance learning non-profit educational service that was established before the pandemic (English Montreal School Board, 2021). As of the fall 2021, when schools closed due to a COVID-19 outbreak, a ‘virtual-classwork system’ had not been fully implemented (Lofaro & Sherwin, 2021). However, students who needed learning devices were able to receive them from their schools. All extracurricular activities resumed with secondary students required to have a vaccine passport to play in some sporting events, such as competitions (Québec Ministry of Education, 2021).

Ontario

	<p><i>2019-20 Figures</i></p> <p>Population: 14,723,497 Number of K-12 Schools: 4844 Number of K-12 Students: 2,056,055</p> <p>Number of Formal K-12 Distance Education Programs: ~81 Number of Formal K-12 Distance Education Students: ~850,000</p>
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Spring 2020 Closure

Schools in Ontario closed on March 23, 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 with a curricular focus on literacy and numeracy. The Ministry already provided a Virtual Learning Environment with digital courses and resources that also provided free webinars, resources, and training for teachers and resources for parents. The Ministry partnered with Rogers Communications and Apple to allow school boards to distribute iPad devices pre-equipped with free Rogers LTE wireless data up to June 2020. The attendance expectations for students in grades K-6 were five hours of engagement in remote teaching, grades 7 and 8 10 hours, and grades 9-12 three hours per course per week for students on a semester system, 1.5 hours for students in a non-semester 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.

Existing E-Learning Resources Prior to 2020-21 School Year

The Ontario Ministry of Education provided school boards with access to a learning management system and other tools and asynchronous course content for 122 English-language and 109 French-language courses for the delivery of e-learning. All educators in the 60 English-speaking and 12 French-speaking public school boards could use the Ministry-tools and materials in conjunction with their own course materials. As well, there were as many as eight different private or independent K-12 distance or online learning programs that students could attend.

Fall 2020 Reopening

Most school boards chose to delay the start of in-person learning by one week with staggered start dates by grade level and remote learning was delayed by two weeks. Elementary students had the option to attend class full-time or continue with remote learning while secondary students used cohort groupings to limit class size to 15. Blended learning was used for students who were not able to attend in-school due to COVID-19 and for secondary cohort groups to attend school on alternate days. Enhanced health measures were put in place, physical distancing, signage to control student movement, and the staggering of lunches, recesses, and bell times and masks were mandatory for grades 4-12 classrooms. For remote learning students, a daily schedule was to be provided based on a five-hour instructional day for students with limited

access to the internet, the Ministry suggested boards open school spaces to accommodate students in a supervised ‘study hall’.

2020-21 School Year

The 2020-21 school year proceeded with in-person learning, but on January 4, 2021, emergency remote learning began again due to a provincial lockdown. Various regions across Ontario reopened at different times based on COVID-19 cases: elementary school students in most regions returned to in-person learning on February 1, 2021, with mandatory masks for all students in grades one to three, who had previously been exempt. By February 8, 2021, most southwestern Ontario students returned to in-school learning, with secondary students returning on February 22. The March Break was postponed for all public schools until the week of April 12, 2021, and all provincial schools returned to remote learning on April 19 with schools remaining closed for the remainder of the school year.

Fall 2021 Reopening

Factors impacting the instructional model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No mandatory vaccination requirements • Masking is required for grades 1 to 12 • Cohorts not required • Physical distancing where possible • Co-curricular and extracurricular activities can resume
Instructional models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools return to full-time in-person learning • Boards required to provide students the opportunity for remote learning with “300 minutes of learning opportunities and adhere to requirements outlined in Policy/Program Memorandum No. 164”
Continuity of learning plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Boards should have plans in place so they can move to remote learning quickly to ensure continuity of learning for students” • “Staff, students and families should be aware of the school board’s remote learning plan should the need arise to move to remote learning in the event of classroom, school or board closure”

All of Ontario’s public schools from K-12 returned to full in-person learning in the fall of 2021 with masks, cohorting, and social distancing as much as possible. This also included staggering schedules to limit student numbers in hallways and cafeterias. Secondary students still worked in quadesters, taking two courses at a time (Fox, 2021b), and several school boards opted for hybrid learning for secondary schools (Bowden, 2021). Caregivers had the option to keep their child in remote learning via each board’s virtual school, which was mandated by the province as an option within all public school boards (Fox, 2021b). However, some school boards did not allow caregivers to change the mode of learning once they had opted into either remote or in-school learning (Sarrouh, 2021; K. Wilson, 2021). In case of active COVID-19 within schools, each school board was responsible to prepare their own response. As such, if specific cohorts or whole schools were affected they would return to remote learning for a 14-day quarantine (Herhalt, 2021; Wilhelm, 2021). Extra-curricular activities and sports were encouraged by the Ministry to continue. However, it was also the responsibility of specific school boards on how to

enact that goal. Finally, all student assessments and standardized testing resumed as normal (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2021).

Interestingly, the Ministry of Education also wanted remote learning to be put in place during inclement weather, as part of their back-to- school plan for 2021-22 (DeClerq, 2021).

Manitoba

	<p><i>2019-20 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 Formal K-12 E-Learning Programs: ~38 Number of Formal K-12 E-Learning Students: ~13,749</p>
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Spring 2020 Closure

Schools in Manitoba closed on March 20, 2020. The Ministry of Education launched their remote teaching website, *My Learning at Home*, which offered connections to curriculum activities for each grade with a focus on literacy and numeracy as well as mental and physical health to support students, parents, and guardians. For those students who had limited access to online learning, printed materials were provided and outreach for at-risk students was encouraged. Teachers were asked to provide daily communication with students via telephone, online platforms, email, or regular post. 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 marks. All provincial standardized testing was cancelled.

Existing E-Learning Resources Prior to 2020-21 School Year

Each school division in the province participated in one or more of the distance education program options. The Independent Study Option (ISO) (i.e., print) offered 55 courses in English and 13 in French for grades nine to 12 students. The Teacher Mediated Option (TMO) (i.e., instructional television), managed by rural school divisions through the TMO Consortium in partnership with Manitoba Education and Training, offered fewer courses but included direct teacher involvement and support to the student. Finally, there was also a Web-Based Course (WBC) Option, which allowed all Manitoba teachers are able to use the WBC learning management system and its grade nine to 12 courses for free with both distance or classroom-based students.

Fall 2020 Reopening

Cohort grouping for students as a class was implemented with a cap at 75 students maximum for other activities, with physical distancing (i.e., two meters) between groups, staggering lunch and breaks, entry, and exits. Learning from home could be an option where physical distancing was not a challenge and schools could engage in a blended model of learning, both synchronous and asynchronous. Full attendance was required for the in-school or blended learning model. Grade 12 provincial assessments continued for the 2020-21 school year. School divisions and teachers

were responsible for identifying student needs regarding technology, and Manitoba Education supported the availability of devices as well as access to alternative options for students with limited access to the internet.

2020-21 School Year

The 2020-21 school year proceeded with in-person learning, but on January 4, 2021, students in grades seven to 12 were required to return to remote learning for two weeks which was optional for students in kindergarten to grade six. The province did not issue a province-wide shutdown of schools, instead, it was on a region by region basis. Depending on the level of risk due to COVID-19, there were three stages offered: level one in school, level two a blended model, and level three fully remote. Blended learning prioritized students with special needs for in-school learning. Fully remote students were still expected to engage in full participation during the day with regular assessments. Parents who wanted their child to remain at home were required to decide by January 30, 2021, which then remained in effect for the rest of the 2020-21 school year. Students in grades one to four within the remote learning model were expected to engage in five to six hours of synchronous learning per week and two and a half hours of asynchronous work each week, grades five to eight seven to eight hours of synchronous learning per week with three hours of asynchronous work per day. A further requirement was for teachers to meet individually with their students for at least 20 minutes per week and each school division and individual schools were responsible for students having access to digital devices.

Fall 2021 Reopening

Factors impacting the instructional model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No mandatory vaccination requirements • Masking is required indoors and on buses • Cohorts in K-6 • Physical distancing where possible • Co-curricular and extracurricular activities can resume based on public health guidance and orders
Instructional models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools return to full-time in-person learning • Online learning available for students who are immunocompromised
Continuity of learning plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Province released <i>Manitoba Education Standards for Remote Learning</i> guidelines to be followed by schools in instances where temporary remote learning is necessary

Schools in Manitoba returned to in-person learning for the 2021-22 school year. Online learning continued for students (or other household members) who were immunocompromised (People for Education, 2021), and they could access learning materials through the Manitoba Remote Learning Center online. For students in grades 9-12, who were immunocompromised, they had online options available such as: *InformNet*, *Teacher Mediated Option*, and the *Learning from Home School* (Manitoba Education, 2021a). Further, parents still had access to the *My Learning at Home website for resources* (Manitoba Education, 2021b). Remote learning in any other instances would be used as a ‘last resort’ should COVID-19 cases increase. However, should students return to remote learning, the requirements included: four or five hours of synchronous

learning per week and two and half hours of asynchronous learning per day for grades 1-4; seven to eight hours of synchronous learning per week and three hours of asynchronous learning per day grades 5-8; and two hours of synchronous learning per course per week and one hour of asynchronous learning per course per day grades 9-12. Additionally, Kindergarten would engage in one to two hours of play-based learning per day. All schools would be responsible for making technology accessible to students, but if technology was not available print-based materials would be provided. All student assessments and reporting continue as normal.

The province also created support resources for online learning through the Manitoba Remote Learning Support Center (n.d.). These supports include professional learning resources for teachers (e.g., the provincial framework to support online learning), tools for video conferencing, information on student learning platforms, professional learning opportunities (e.g., workshops), and connecting to other professionals and professional learning facilitators.

Saskatchewan

	<p><i>2019-20 Figures</i></p> <p>Population: 1,181,987 Number of K-12 Schools: 780 Number of K-12 Students: 186,036</p> <p>Number of Formal K-12 E-Learning Programs: 16 Number of Formal K-12 E-Learning Students: 12,456</p>
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Spring 2020 Closure

Schools in Saskatchewan closed on March 20, 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 that made curricular connections to health education, science, and social science as well as a resource page to support mental health and tips for remote teaching for parents and guardians. Teachers continued to create lessons to support individual students and 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 grades only. The mandate was to pass all students with at least a 50% grade, and no report cards were issued.

Existing E-Learning Resources Prior to 2020-21 School Year

In Saskatchewan school divisions were responsible to ensure distance and online learning opportunities with local support. School divisions were also required to ensure that distance learners had success rates that were equivalent to students in traditional classroom environments. There were 16 provincial online programs in 13 school divisions, one independent school, and one First Nation educational authority recognized as K-12 online schools.

Fall 2020 Reopening

Saskatchewan schools had a one-week delayed start to the 2020-21 school year with enhanced health measures in place which included: classroom cohorts, physical distancing, and staggered start, end, and break times, dedicated entries and exits with signage to control student movement, outdoor activities whenever possible, no sharing of materials, spaced out desks, and alternatives to large assemblies, such as virtual gatherings. Technology was deployed to limit sharing and masks were not mandatory but recommended in grades 4-12, particularly where physical distancing was not possible. Grades K-8 used *Google Classroom* as their learning management system (LMS), grades 9-12 *Blackboard*. Remote learning consisted of both asynchronous and synchronous activities, and assessment and reporting continued as usual. For students working

under a remote learning model, the *Online Learning Center* offered a curriculum for both English and French Immersion.

2020-21 School Year

The 2020-21 school year proceeded with in-person learning, but on November 12, 2020, Regina high schools moved to alternative days of learning to reduce their capacity by 50% and by mid-November several of Regina and Saskatoon high schools went partially online and in-person. By mid-December, all public schools in Regina closed until January 11, 2021, and other schools closed on a by-need basis. In March 2021, the province closed all public schools and students returned to remote learning, but no specific guidelines regarding synchronous and asynchronous learning, nor any remote learning supports, were found on Ministry of Education websites.

Fall 2021 Reopening

Factors impacting the instructional model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No mandatory vaccination requirements • Masking is required for unvaccinated students and staff, not required for students in the classroom • Cohorts not required • Physical distancing not required
Instructional models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools return to full-time in-person learning • “High school students will be able to obtain credits through a variety of educational avenues, such as classes offered out of grade order, special project credits and online classes”
Continuity of learning plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only <i>Interim Provincial Education Plan</i> released, which primarily focused on addressing learning loss from 2020-21 school year

Schools across Saskatchewan returned to in-person learning for the 2021-22 school year, without any COVID-19 restrictions (Government of Saskatchewan, 2021). Students who did not return to in-person learning were able to attend Saskatchewan’s *Flex Ed* online virtual school. The *Flex Ed* program was in place in the province before the pandemic (Shynkaruk, 2021) and is funded by the government (Flex Ed, 2021). All sports, extra-curricular activities, and drama and music continued. Provincial exams were made optional for this school year (Government of Saskatchewan, 2021).

Alberta

	<p><i>2019-20 Figures</i></p> <p>Population: 4,421,876 Number of K-12 Schools: 2,503 Number of K-12 Students: 741,802</p> <p>Number of Formal K-12 E-Learning Programs: 34 Number of Formal K-12 E-Learning Students: 82,857</p>
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Spring 2020 Closure

Schools in Alberta closed on March 16, 2020. The province launched its *Learn Alberta* website to support remote teaching for students and parents with a curricular focus on literacy and numeracy. Teachers were mandated to continue evaluating student learning while focusing on learning standards 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. 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.

Existing E-Learning Resources Prior to 2020-21 School Year

Alberta Education listed 34 different distance and/or online learning programs as a part of their website directory. However, the provincial distance education program (i.e., the Alberta Distance Learning Centre) ceased operations following the 2020-21 school year, with the responsibility for distance learning reverting to individual school division programs. The provincial consortium of the five French school divisions continued to support the provincial *Centre francophone d'éducation à distance* program.

Fall 2020 Reopening

There were no delays to the start of the Fall 2020-21 school year. Alberta returned to school under scenario one, which included full in-person learning with near-normal operations within the school for grades K-12. The inclusion of added health measures, cohorts, and physical distancing (i.e., two meters where possible) were added. Staggered lunch and breaks were also included to assist with physical distancing. Masks were mandatory for grades 4-12 where physical distancing was not possible, but masks were not mandatory while children were sitting at their desks or where physical distancing was possible. Class sizes were not limited with the exception of a 20-student cap in Kindergarten. Distance learning was an option for students.

2020-21 School Year

The 2020-21 school year proceeded with in-person learning, however, parents had the option to keep their students in remote learning for the 2020-21 school year while some district schools used a blended model of learning with cohorts for in-school students. In a remote learning model, a minimum number of hours per day online was required: kindergarten five hours per week, grades 1-3 ten, 4-6 12.5 hours, 7-9 fifteen, and grades 10-12 three hours per course per week. Students were expected to attend most of these hours synchronously. On November 30, 2020, junior and high schools (grades 7-12) moved to remote learning with elementary schools closing shortly after as well. All schools returned to in-school learning on January 11, 2021, only to shift back to remote learning sometime between April 21 and May 3, 2021. In-school learning resumed in late May but schools and/or specific classes required to quarantine for two weeks continued learning remotely. Platforms used for remote learning included Google Meet and Zoom. Assessment, evaluation, and reporting continued as usual, but the provincial achievement tests were optional for school authorities.

Fall 2021 Reopening

Factors impacting the instructional model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No mandatory vaccination requirements • Masking is not required in schools, but is required on buses • Cohorts not required • Physical distancing not required • Co-curricular and extracurricular activities can resume
Instructional models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools return to full-time in-person learning
Continuity of learning plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “School authorities continue to have the discretion to shift a grade or grades to at-home/online learning” • “Approval from the Minister of Education is required for a short-term shift of one or more schools or an entire school authority to at-home/online learning for operational reasons” • “A decision for a school authority request will be based on the ability of a school to have staff available to operate in-school classes”

Alberta public and Catholic schools returned to in-person learning for the 2021-22 school year. Cohorting continued with the option to pivot to remote learning should the need arise (Alberta Education, 2021a), with this decision made by individual school authorities (with the approval from the Ministry of Education for short-term shifts or entire schools). However, as COVID-19 numbers began to rise at the end of the summer some school boards, such as Edmonton Public Schools and Edmonton Catholic Schools, offered online learning as an option (Lachacz, 2021). Similarly, Calgary offered online learning through their online school Cbe-learn (Calgary Board of Education, 2021; White, 2021), while Medicine Hat created an ‘at-home learning hub’ for full-time remote students (Woo, 2021). An online learning directory already established before the pandemic was made available to parents (Alberta Education, 2021b). The hourly requirements for remote learning, when schools need to pivot to online learning, were discretionary in grades K-6 and equivalent school hours for grades 7-12 (Alberta Education, 2021b). All student assessments and standardized testing resumed as normal; except for grade

three testing, which was an option for school authorities. In case of a return to remote learning, these tests could be cancelled at the discretion of school authorities. School authorities also had the option of continuing with extra-curricular activities.

British Columbia

	<p><i>2019-20 Figures</i></p> <p>Population: 5,100,000 Number of K-12 Schools: 1,569 Number of K-12 Students: 548,702</p> <p>Number of Formal K-12 E-Learning Programs: 69 Number of Formal K-12 E-Learning Students: ~59,000</p>
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Spring 2020 Closure

Schools in British Columbia closed on March 17, 2020. The province published the *Continuity of Learning: Planning Guide for Teachers* 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 with a focus on literacy, numeracy, core competencies, and the *First Peoples Principles of Learning*. The distribution of physical equipment was left to school districts, however, the Ministry noted that more than 23,000 computers and devices had been loaned out to students. At a minimum teachers were required to contact each student at least weekly with more frequent contact encouraged and attendance requirements for students were left to be determined at the local level. 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. In-school learning began June 1, 2020, using a hybrid model of online and classroom learning with alternating cohorts of students to ensure physical distancing. All boards were required to implement strict health and safety protocols as defined and monitored by provincial health authorities and WorkSafeBC.

Existing E-Learning Resources Prior to 2020-21 School Year

There were 53 district-level public distributed, or online, learning schools and 16 independent school programs. Additionally, Open School BC provided provincial content and online hosting services for public school districts lacking the capacity or desire to manage their own program. Many schools took advantage of membership in the Western Canadian Learning Network (WCLN), a consortium of public school districts providing online courses, digital resources, and technologies that support their use for public schools in British Columbia (as well as schools and districts in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and the Yukon).

Fall 2020 Reopening

The start of the 2020-21 school year was delayed by two days and opened with in-school learning however students could choose online or distributed learning options. Added health measures included physical distancing, staggering breaks and transition times, and signage to direct the flow of student traffic. Elementary cohorts were between 20 and 30 students and learning groups were capped at 60 students, which limited the number of students who could

interact. Secondary school learning groups were capped at 120 students. Masks were not mandatory and the curriculum included an added focus on mental health and well-being for grades K-12.

2020-21 School Year

The 2020-21 school year proceeded with in-person learning but there remained remote learning options for students across the province in many school districts as well as the online or distributed learning options. Students continued with cohorts or ‘learning groups’ in-school, with 20-30 students in each group with the maximum number per group was 60 in elementary and 120 for secondary. Full curriculum expectations, assessments, and reporting were in place during this school year. The provincial government allocated \$8.2 million to specifically support Indigenous learners to address learning loss, mental health, and technology for remote learning.

Fall 2021 Reopening

Factors impacting the instructional model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No mandatory vaccination requirements • Masking required for grades 4 and up • Cohorts not required • Physical distancing not required • Co-curricular and extracurricular activities can resume
Instructional models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools return to full-time in-person learning • Distributed learning available to students
Continuity of learning plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No specific plans outlined for how remote learning should be undertaken if/when a school or board is forced to close

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

Yukon

	<p><i>2019-20 Figures</i></p> <p>Population: 35,874 Number of K-12 Schools: 33 Number of K-12 Students: 5,456</p> <p>Number of Formal K-12 Distance Education Programs: 2 Number of Formal K-12 Distance Education Students: 654</p>
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Spring 2020 Closure

Schools in the Yukon closed on March 18, 2020. The 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. The Ministry provided educators with toolkits and advice on digital tools as well as offering online professional development. 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.

Existing E-Learning Resources Prior to 2020-21 School Year

Aurora Virtual School was the only English-language online school in the territory and it offered 51 online courses. The only French-language online program was École Nomade. The territory was also able to access programming from four distance learning schools in British Columbia, as well as the *Centre francophone d'éducation à distance (CFED)* in Alberta.

Fall 2020 Reopening

Elementary schools re-opened as usual for grades K-8 and students in grade 9 continued with a fully in-person model of learning while grades 10-12 in Whitehorse used a blended learning model where students were half in-person and half online five days per week. Enhanced health measures ensuring physical distancing were implemented, including smaller classes and groups. Masks were recommended for ages 10 and older, but not mandatory. Digital tools that could be utilized were: *Moodle*, *Microsoft 365* with *Teams*, *Google Classroom*, and *FreshGrade*. A focus on literacy and numeracy as part of the core competencies continued, as well as a learning recovery model prioritizing formative and benchmarking assessments for both language arts and math.

2020-21 School Year

The 2020-21 school year proceeded with in-person learning but school closures occurred in larger cities and rural areas throughout the 2020-21 school year. The province used a low (i.e., fully in-school) to high (i.e., fully remote) scale, and between fully in-school and fully remote a flexible learning model was put in place. When moving from low to high, initially only essential groups (i.e., students with diverse needs) would attend in-school full-time, while the rest of the students would engage in a part-time rotating schedule with blended learning. Moving toward the high-end of the scale (i.e., before fully remote) only students with significant needs, such as students with disabilities and diverse learning needs attended in-school full-time while most of the students were remote learning. Digital tools were used at varying degrees dependent on grade level to support instruction and learning.

Fall 2021 Reopening

Factors impacting the instructional model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No mandatory vaccination requirements • Masking required outside of the classroom and on the bus • Cohorts not required • Physical distancing not required • Co-curricular and extracurricular activities can resume
Instructional models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools return to full-time in-person learning • Supports for students, teachers and support staff for flexible learning during full-time in-person, including access to technology tools and training
Continuity of learning plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidance for instances where schools can maintain 100%, 50%, 20%, and 0% capacity (including preference given to some groups of students for in person learning; models for hybrid and distance learning; etc.)

Schools opened to in-person learning for the 2021-22 school year, with no mandatory physical distancing requirements for students (Yukon Education, 2021b). Even though students were in-school full-time, a blended learning approach was adopted, with teachers “working in concert with other experiential/place-based, service learning activities” (Yukon Education, 2021c, para 4). This choice of mode was put in place so that teachers could combine “in-person instruction with digitally managed instruction” (Yukon Education, 2021d, p. 19). The blended learning requirements varied per grade level, and included: K-3 in-person with the use of integrated technology; grades 4-12 in-person with a blend of in-person activities with teachers and peers, as well as the use of digital tools and online learning activities. Platforms to be used included *Moodle*, *Microsoft 365* with *Teams* and *One Note*, *Google Classroom*, and *FreshGrade* (Yukon Education, 2021e). With a bring your own device (BYOD) policy, if students needed a digital device, school administrators were asked to loan out the needed technology or find alternative solutions for students without internet connectivity (Yukon Education, 2021d). If caregivers chose not to have their child attend in-person learning, they also had the opportunity to enroll their child in the Aurora Virtual School or home education.

Teachers were tasked with using a ‘trauma-informed leadership lens’ for working with students and their ‘recovery learning’ (Yukon Education, 2021d). To assist with this mandate a website was offered as a source for professional learning for teachers, which included pre-recorded videos (e.g., how to use assistive technology) (Yukon Education, 2021f).

Northwest Territories

	<p><i>2019-20 Figures</i></p> <p>Population: 44,826 Number of K-12 Schools: 49 Number of K-12 Students: 8,700</p> <p>Number of Formal K-12 E-Learning Programs: 1 Number of Formal K-12 E-Learning Students: 131</p>
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Spring 2020 Closure

Schools in the Northwest Territories closed on March 16, 2020. The government created a *Continuity of Learning* document to support teachers through planning for remote teaching and learning that included 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. Students with limited access to the internet had paper-based assignments and for homes with access to the internet, suggested technologies were *Google Classroom, Moodle, Facebook Live, GoToMeeting, Skype, and Zoom*. Communication also consisted of local radio stations or telephone, and radio stations were made available to provide lessons through storytelling. 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 was cancelled and report cards were distributed.

Existing E-Learning Resources Prior to 2020-21 School Year

The Northern Distance Learning program (NDL) provided a synchronous distance learning program through videoconferencing, which included access to online asynchronous course material. Additionally, grades 9-12 students could be enrolled in distance learning courses offered through the Alberta Distance Learning Centre.

Fall 2020 Reopening

There was no delay to the start of the 2020-21 school year which started with in-school learning. Increased health measures included regular classes with learning ‘bubbles’ for grades K-6 with no physical distancing within the bubble and physical distancing for grades 7-9 of one meter and two meters for school staff as well as grades 8-12 students. There were controlled entries and exits for student traffic flow, staggered lunches and recess, spacing of desks and furniture, no large assemblies or gatherings, and outdoor activities as much as possible. Masks were not mandatory for in-person and masks were used when physical distancing could not be achieved. The curriculum was to be delivered as usual, and learning shifts were a possibility, where secondary students attended in the morning or afternoons on alternating days.

2020-21 School Year

The 2020-21 school year proceeded with in-person learning but the provincial capital of Yellowknife closed schools and returned to emergency remote learning on May 3, 2021, which was lifted May 17. Both in-school, blended, and remote learning (i.e., for students needing to self-isolate) were options for the 2020-2021 school year. During blended learning, students attend in-school in the morning and then remotely in the afternoon to complete schoolwork online or with paper learning packages. Working on the land was also an option during remote learning. Assessments and reporting continued as usual regardless of the learning model and students who needed assistive technologies had access to these supports.

Fall 2021 Reopening

Factors impacting the instructional model	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No mandatory vaccination requirements• Masking required• Cohorts not required, but strongly recommended• Physical distancing not required for grades 7 and up• Most co-curricular and extracurricular activities still on hold
Instructional models	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Schools return to full-time in-person learning• Remote learning is available for students with medical concerns
Continuity of learning plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “In-person learning is the best method of education delivery... with this in mind the [government] have put measures in place to keep our JK-12 schools open for in-person learning as much as possible”• No specific plans outlined for how remote learning should be undertaken if a school is forced to close

Schools opened for in-person learning for the 2021-22 school year. Only students with medical exemptions continued with remote learning (People for Education, 2021). Safety measures, such as physical distancing remained in place for Kindergarten to grade 6, with cohort ‘bubbles’ remaining in place, and outdoor learning as much as possible (i.e., no indoor activities such as choir, drama, assemblies, or sports continued). Any student that needed to self-isolate or was sick with COVID-19 returned to remote learning, while healthy students who did not want to attend in-person learning had to follow the Home Schooling Regulations (Government of Northwest Territories, 2021). All student assessments returned to normal pre-pandemic practices.

Nunavut

	<p><i>2019-20 Figures</i></p> <p>Population: 35,944 Number of K-12 Schools: 44 Number of K-12 Students: 10,107</p> <p>Number of Formal K-12 E-Learning Programs: 0 Number of Formal K-12 E-Learning Students: 19</p>
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Spring 2020 Closure

Schools in Nunavut closed on March 17, 2020. The Department of Education created their remote teaching website called *Angirrami ilnniarniq (Learning from Home)* which offered resources for teachers to print and prepare packages to be sent out to students with limited internet access. The website included 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. 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 the progress already met before school closure. All high school exams were cancelled and student progress was assessed on an individual basis for credit requirements.

Existing E-Learning Resources Prior to 2020-21 School Year

The Department of Education allowed various educational bodies to offer distance learning, including the Alberta Distance Learning Centre. The development of a Ministerial Directive regarding access to and delivery of distance education has been underway since 2012.

Fall 2020 Reopening

As there were no cases of COVID-19 in the territory of Nunavut, schools fully re-opened as usual for grades K-12. However, added health measures were put in place, which included enhanced cleaning, physical distancing, and limited group activities. Masks were not required.

2020-21 School Year

The 2020-21 school year proceeded with in-person learning but on November 18th, 2020, Nunavut went into a two-week provincial lockdown. After schools in Iqualit closed again in mid-March 2021 as a preventative measure to combat COVID, the government closed all schools across the province for a three-week period. The learning models varied from fully in-school, to partial in-school and remote home-based learning with student cohorts in staggered schedules of attending in-school, to fully remote. Remote learning supports during blended and fully remote

learning included learning packages, ‘supplemental learning tools’ (not specified), ‘enhanced land-based’ learning, and daily check-ins with teachers and students.

Fall 2021 Reopening

Factors impacting the instructional model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No mandatory vaccination requirements • Masking at the discretion of public health officials • Cohorts not required, but strongly recommended • Physical distancing where possible • Most co-curricular and extracurricular activities still on hold
Instructional models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools return to full-time in-person learning unless advise by public health officials
Continuity of learning plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidelines to support remote instruction outlined in <i>Learning to Be Together Again: Support for Nunavut Schools in 2021-22</i> • “All schools must plan for the distribution of materials to students, such as learning packages and/or devices, to support remote instruction”

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

Federal

	<p><i>2019-20 Figures</i></p> <p>Population: 1,008,955¹ Number of K-12 Schools: 495² Number of K-12 Students: ~109,400³</p> <p>Number of Formal K-12 E-Learning Programs: 5 Number of Formal K-12 E-Learning Students: ~2,200</p>
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¹ 2016 Census data

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

³ 2016-17 data

Existing E-Learning Resources Prior to 2020-21 School Year

There were at least four K-12 distance/online learning programs First Nations programs operating during the 2019-20 school year: two in Ontario, one in Manitoba, and one in Alberta. Each of these programs operated on a regional or provincial basis, with each serving multiple First Nations communities. Most of the distance learning offerings from these programs were focused on secondary or high school level courses.

Federal Public Health Guidance Related to Schools

First Nations schools do not fall under provincial jurisdiction. While many schools may have followed the mandates and guidelines in the respective provinces in which the school is located, Indigenous Services Canada supported First Nations Control of First Nations Education and, as such, the First Nation communities made their own choices regarding their protocols and delivery methods.

Federal guidance for K-12 school re-opening was based on the most current scientific information as outlined in *Community-based Measures to Mitigate the Spread of Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) in Canada*. The Federal Government also outlined considerations for reducing risk through the use of cafeterias and libraries, as well as specific school activities such as music and physical education. The use of masks for risk reduction was encouraged, specifically for children over ten years of age and particularly where physical distancing could not be achieved. Extra considerations for students with disabilities included continued access to supports and services with extra accommodations made where necessary. Supports were also outlined for Indigenous communities who were “remote” or “isolated” specifically regarding health measures for First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities to mitigate risk.

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Appendix A

Table A-1. *Active COVID-19 cases by jurisdiction*

Jurisdiction	01 June	01 July	01 August	01 September
BC	2871	884	1598	6135
AB	6771	1122	2129	12290
SK	1272	420	496	2372
MB	4330	1481	603	480
ON	11689	2265	1667	5861
QC	3609	980	1299	4729
NB	143	25	38	128
NS	369	51	9	60
PE	4	1	0	8
NL	94	9	9	34
YT	0	133	73	21
NT	0	0	0	115
NV	9	0	0	0

Data downloaded from <https://health-infobase.canada.ca/covid-19/epidemiological-summary-covid-19-cases.html>

Figure A-1. Active COVID-19 cases across Canada (posted 01 June 2021)

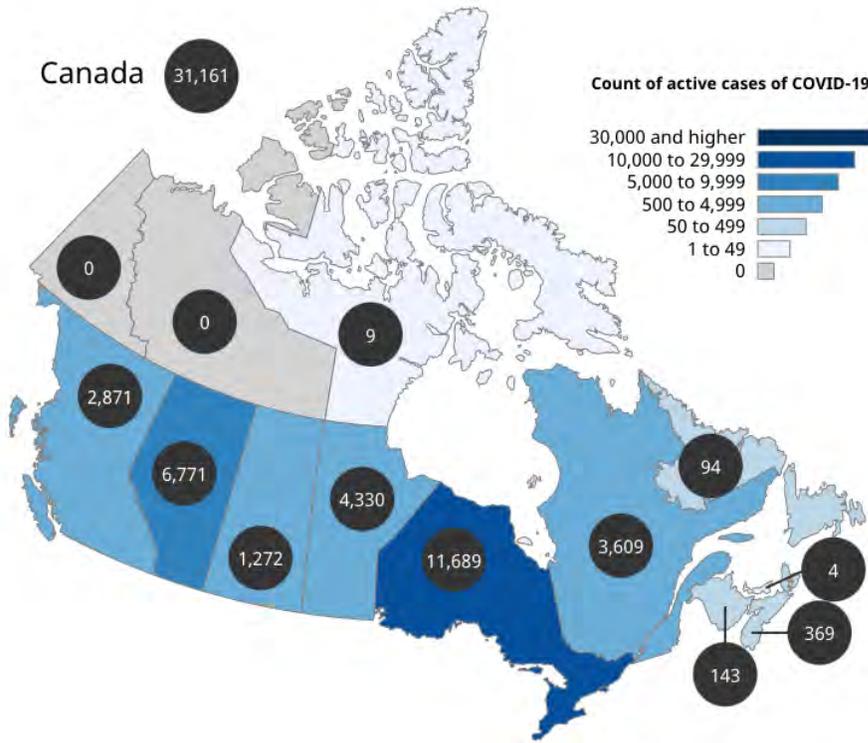


Figure A-2. Active COVID-19 cases across Canada (posted 01 July 2021)

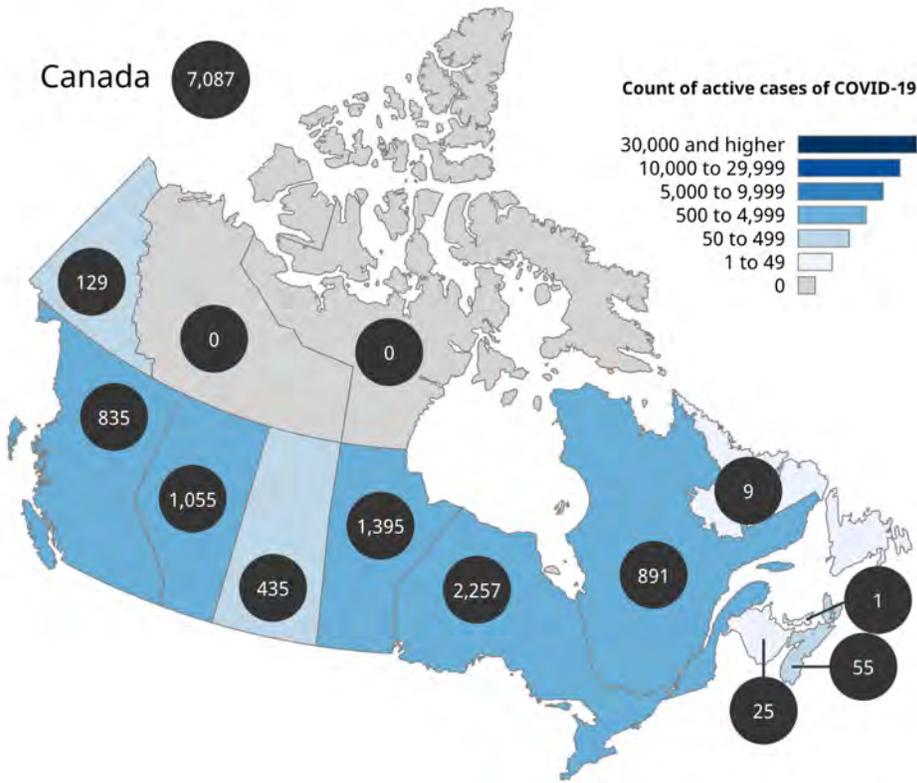


Figure A-3. Active COVID-19 cases across Canada (posted 01 August 2021)

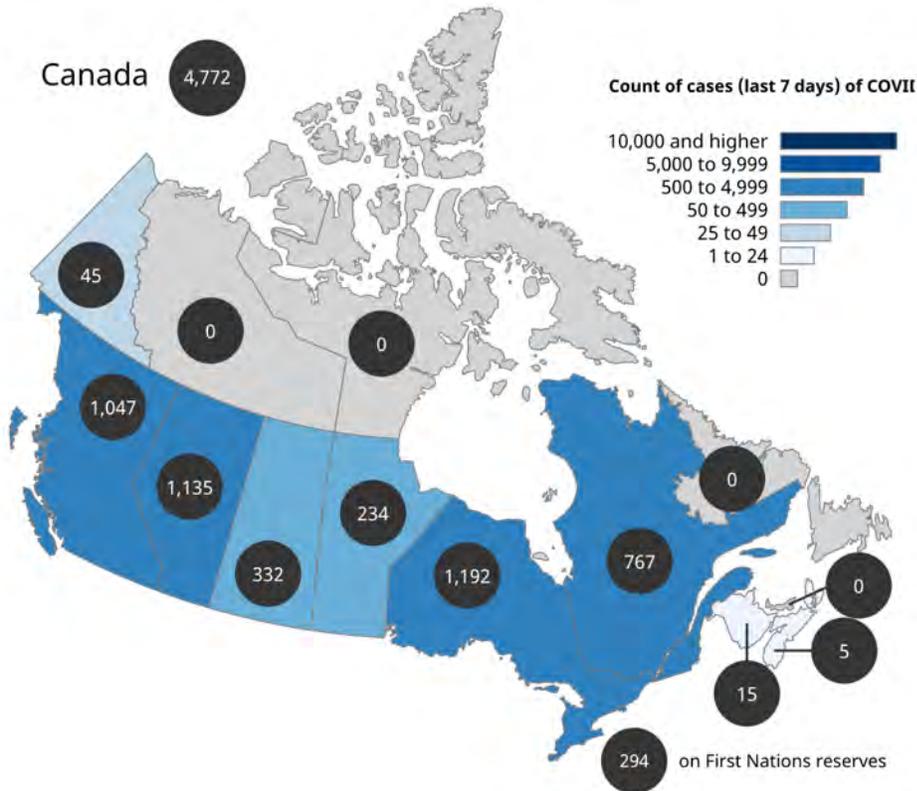
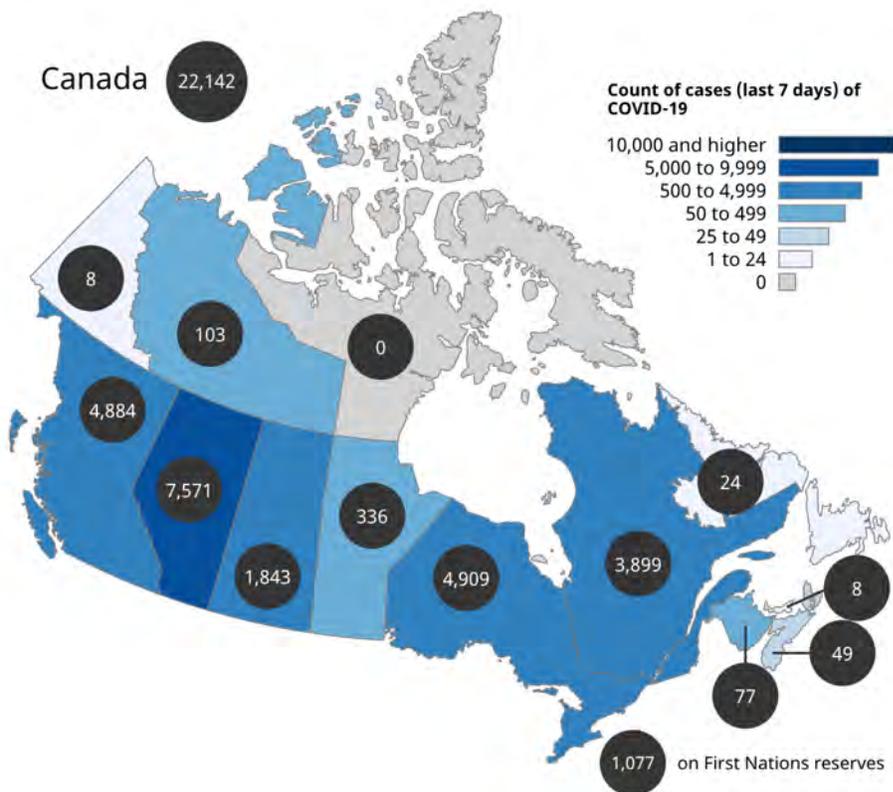


Figure A-4. Active COVID-19 cases across Canada (posted 01 September 2021)





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