



Government of
Northwest Territories

Northern Distance Learning (NDL)

A Guide for Parents/Guardians

OUR VISION

Students in small communities have access to equitable academic programming enabling them to:

- ▶ STAY IN THEIR HOME COMMUNITY
- ▶ MEET THE GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS OF HIGH SCHOOL; AND
- ▶ PREPARE TO ENTER POST-SECONDARY PROGRAMS DIRECTLY FROM HIGH SCHOOL



WHAT IS NORTHERN DISTANCE LEARNING (NDL)?

Since 2014, Northern Distance Learning (NDL) has been bringing academic courses, through online learning, to students in small community schools where there are not enough students to justify a full time teacher.

Students take the academic curriculum in live, online classes with other groups of students from across the NWT. NDL classrooms include an In-class Support Person (ISP) who assists the live teacher on the screen, which makes it a similar learning experience to a student's regular classrooms.

Over the long term, NDL is developing students' sense of independence and ownership over their learning, which enables them to be more responsible for their own learning.

"NDL has helped me achieve the set goals in academic courses to set me up for postsecondary. Without these courses, I wouldn't have as broad opinions for future college courses."

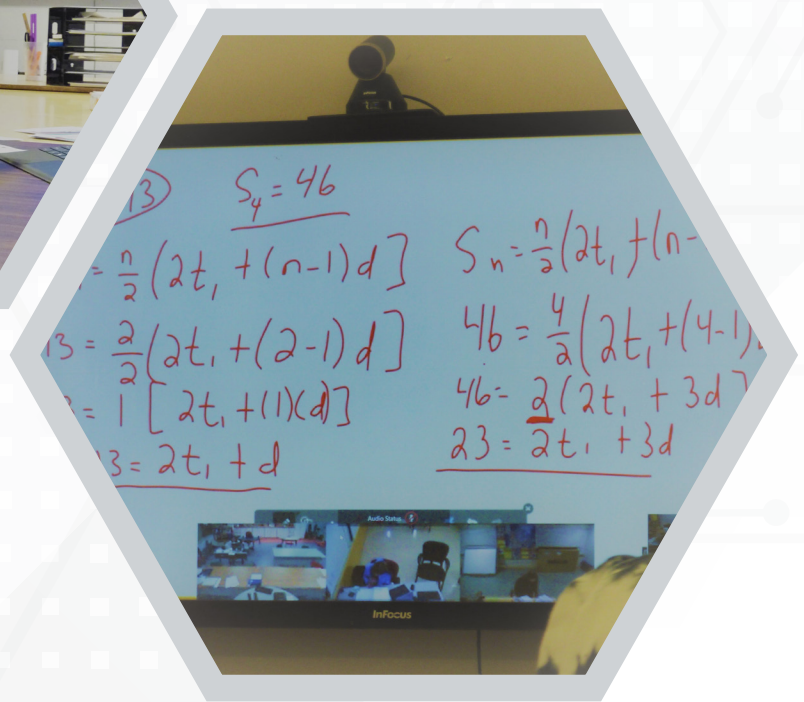
- NDL Student

COURSES

Northern Distance Learning offers 19 different courses

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS (10-1, 20-1, 30-1)
MATH (10C, 20-1, 30-1) • SCIENCE 10
SOCIAL STUDIES (10-1, 20-1, 30-1)
BIO (20, 30) • PHYSICS (20, 30)
CHEMISTRY (20, 30) • ART (10, 20, 30)

NOTE: Beginning in 2021-2022, NDL will be able to offer all 19 courses each year, eliminating multi-year cycles.



NDL ELIGIBILITY

NDL is not designed for all high school students. The program is designed with high expectations and standards to prepare participating students to succeed not only in high school, but in making a direct transition to post-secondary programming as well. Eligibility standards will help ensure that NDL students are best equipped to meet high postsecondary standards. The following eligibility standards will be used to guide decisions related to student access to NDL:

Personal Commitment

To participate in NDL students must show their commitment by:

- Completing the application form and submitting it by the end of March to take classes in either semester for the coming school year
- Taking the NDL orientation
- Being willing to work with students from other communities through, online, inter-community groups using various technologies

Attendance

During the application process, students have to provide details regarding their attendance record for the previous year. The program recommends a minimum 90% attendance level for entry – not including excused absences (e.g. funerals, weddings, cultural events, etc.). Students who attended less than 90% of classes the previous year will have to demonstrate a high level of achievement in the required prerequisite courses before entering the NDL program.

Achievement

Students enrolled in NDL are expected to have passed any prerequisite courses from the previous year or semester with an average of 65% or higher. This minimum standard prepares the student for entrance requirements of most post-secondary programs. If a student's final course score is below 65%, they should seek council on whether to continue in NDL and if so, with what supports.

"It helped me realize and solidify the notion to apply for and attend university as the next step in my life." - NDL Student

Personal Endorsements

To participate in NDL students must have a:

- Recommendation by, and support of, administrators of their school
- Recommendation by an informed parent or guardian, who is aware of their child's previous academic experience, the purpose of NDL, and the difference between -1 and -2 level courses

Age

NDL is intended for students who have been continuously enrolled in high school. It is not intended for adult students and should not be considered a tool for adult upgrading.

REGISTRATION

Registration for NDL starts in March and ends April 15. Information about how many students are joining NDL and what classes they are taking is used as a planning tool for the next NDL school year. Students registering after April 15 will be added to class lists if space is available.

ROLES

FOR PARENTS AND GUARDIANS IN NDL

You have a key role in supporting your child in the NDL program:

Stay informed about their progress through the NDL report card and attending the online parent/guardian/teacher conference (ask the ISP for a time)

Provide additional information to the teacher about your child that might be helpful in knowing how to best educate them

Keep informed about what supportive services are available

Ask questions and connect with the local ISP

MAINTAINING ELIGIBILITY

Students need to have a strong start in NDL courses—which is most often related to their attendance. It has become clear that any absence whether excused or unexcused makes successful post-secondary preparation very difficult. An unexcused absence is one that the teacher was not told about in advance or one that does not have a reasonable explanation. An excused absence is for illness, funerals, cultural events, etc. After three unexcused absences, a documented meeting will take place (see *Supports to Remain Strong* section below). If three such interventions by October 15, or March 15, are not effective in supporting a student's full attendance, the student will be removed from the NDL course. Being removed can be appealed (see *Appeal Process* section below).

Achievement

After each semester, students are assessed for eligibility to continue in NDL. Students who were unsuccessful in three or more NDL courses since entering the program will not continue in NDL.

In order to access the next level of an NDL course, a 65% recommended average in the prerequisite course should be reached by the student. Without this minimum score, a student may want to return to the regular program. Post-secondary institutions look at the courses taken, as well as the marks obtained in those courses. The key is for students to take the courses they need for the program they intend to enter, and access supports so they can achieve at a high level.

Appeal Process

Before being removed from the NDL program a student may appeal by explaining their intentions to the NDL principal and then completing an appeal form by a specific deadline. This includes an explanation for the lack of success, and a plan to improve their performance.

Supports to Remain Strong

If a student's eligibility is at risk, especially at the beginning of a course, the In-class Support Person (ISP) and school principal will meet and discuss various supports to help the student quickly adjust to the level of participation and achievement expected in NDL. After three unexcused absences, a student will receive a call or a visit from the ISP. A record of that intervention will be signed and dated by the student, parent, and the ISP, and communicated to the teacher and local principal.

Get to Know the Team

Support your child in the transition to NDL by getting to know the In-class Support Person (ISP) volunteering in your community, and meeting the highly-qualified NDL teachers during the Parent-Teacher online public meetings.

"I participated in NDL classes because it offered the courses that were required to get into a university program I was considering. I also believed that taking NDL courses would best prepare me for post-secondary education."

- NDL Student

IS NDL HARD?

NDL will be different from your child's regular classes. At first, your child might find it harder. At first his/her grades might be lower than what you are used to seeing. There is a reason for this, and they will improve.

Students at post-secondary institutions often work outside of the regular class period to complete assignments and projects.

NDL students should too. You can help your child transition to this environment by encouraging them to do their homework with the ISP after school, and by making a time and place for them at home to study and prepare for the next day.

SUPPORTS FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Northern Distance Learning (NDL) has high expectations for students. Through NDL, the Department of Education, Culture & Employment (ECE) wishes to support parents/guardians to help their child pursue their goal of continuing on to complete post-secondary studies. You are now the parent/guardian of a 'distance learner' (NDL) as well as a 'brick and mortar learner' (local school).

NDL planners that many students have lived their whole lives in their small community and NDL programming exists to make sure they can choose to stay at home until they finish high school. However, NDL creates new learning conditions that you and your children may not be familiar with.

Here is a list of supports that can help parents/guardians respond to changes and challenges that may arise while students adjust to NDL programming:

Your consent. Schools receive the new student NDL application each February. Part of what is required is for you to sign the "Parent Consent Form". We want you to know and agree to your child participating in NDL programming at your local school.

Parents/Guardians orientation. An orientation to NDL prepares parents/guardians of NDL students for "what to expect" in NDL classes before their child joins. This orientation takes place online in early September and February (for new 2nd semester students) using the same tools that NDL students use to learn with their teacher and peers. This event is subject to COVID-19 restrictions.

PowerSchool Account. Parents/Guardians and the child can login through the web or the phone app to see student progress in the course. For example, parents/guardians can see a date the child was absent from class, the Gradebook and what assignments the child has completed, the mark, and what needs to be done. The login and phone app details are sent to you through email.

Parents or Guardians/teacher reporting conferences. Parents/Guardians can meet NDL teachers after report cards are sent home. This involves signing up for a time at the school to see and speak to the teacher by using the same technologies your child uses each day.

Parents/Guardians Guide. NDL is explained to parents/guardians at the Education, Culture and Employment website. Visit <https://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/en/services/education-renewal/northern-distance-learning>

Contacting NDL with your questions. Parents/Guardians can reach out to an NDL teacher or the In-class Support Person (ISP) by using the emails provided by the local school principal or the child.

