



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 higher-level academic courses 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.



"I don't think I would have been able to go to university with my program if it wasn't for NDL, because I just didn't have access to the courses that were required to get into my program without NDL. They had the Biology and

and Chemistry and Physics courses that I needed to get into my program. Also it really prepared me because NDL was very much centered on independent learning. In or out of COVID, that is kind of what university is like - you go to lectures two to three times a week and then you have your independent readings and assessments. Already having done that for the four years that I was in high school, it really prepared me well for university and that self-directed learning that you have to do."

- Laney Beaulieu, former NDL student

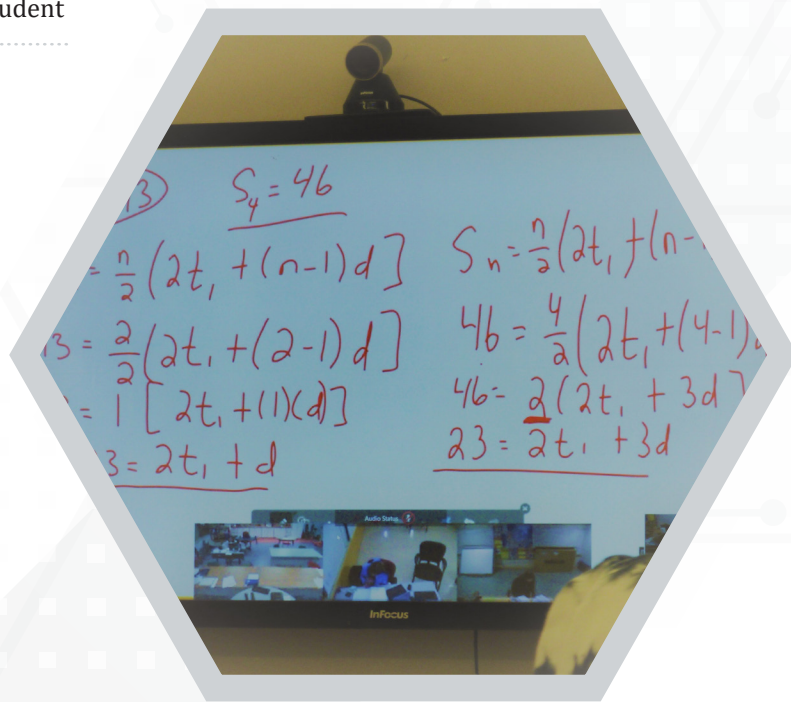
Over the long term, NDL is developing students' sense of independence and ownership over their learning, which enables them to be more responsible for their own learning.

COURSES

Northern Distance Learning offers 19 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: Since the beginning of 2021-2022, NDL has been offering all 19 courses each year, eliminating the practice of only offering some courses every two or three years.



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 also in making a direct transition to post-secondary programming. Eligibility standards will help ensure that NDL students are best equipped to meet high post-secondary 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.
- Willing to work with students from other communities through online, inter-community groups using various technologies.

Attendance

Students who have succeeded in NDL have come into the program with high attendance records and have missed very few NDL classes.

Applicants who are want to work to NDL standards, but have attendance records as low as 80%, must be recommended by their principal, and will be accepted on a case-by-case basis, depending on course availability. NDL will take into consideration what causes impacted a student's attendance.

Achievement

Students enroled 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.

"[NDL] 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 enroled 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 February and ends April 15. Information on applications helps 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 NDL PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

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 In-class Support Person (ISP) for a time.

Provide additional information about your child to the teacher that might be helpful to best teach them.

Keep informed about what support 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

NDL programming may no longer be suitable for a student who repeatedly fails NDL courses. When NDL courses are failed, a discussion between the principal, student and parents should clarify the student's future in the program. Understanding the conditions surrounding unsuccessful courses is important to the NDL community.

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) working 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; 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 also do this.

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

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 understands 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, which includes the *Parent Consent Form* for you to sign. 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 student 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 [NDL website](#).

Contacting NDL with your questions. Parents/guardians can reach out to an NDL teacher or the In-class Support Person by using the emails provided by the local school principal or the student. Please reach out with general questions to ndl@gov.nt.ca.