



## Quebec-wide K12 Classes, School Board Meetings, Tutoring, and even Acrobats Thrive with Wimba & LEARN

*"They thought you had to use video conferencing to teach online; but now they get it. With the rising cost of travel (\$1.35/litre for gasoline), the school boards see the need for commissioners to meet more from home instead of driving in."*

*-Tim Scobie, Technical Manager, Leading English Education and Research Network*

The immense size of Quebec might surprise most people. Almost completely surrounded by water, Quebec is three times the size of France and seven times that of Great Britain, making it the largest of Canada's provinces. Yet despite its vastness, the majority of Quebec's 7.5 million citizens live within 100 miles (161 kilometers) of its southernmost border along the United States and New Brunswick. With its population and government centers such as Montreal and Quebec City dominating southern Quebec, many of those who live throughout the greater expanses of the province – particularly schoolchildren – have a significantly more difficult time accessing many 21st-century technologies.

To demonstrate how rural most of Quebec is, the Western Quebec, Central Quebec, and Eastern Shores School Boards encompass thousands of square miles but only have approximately 14,000 students. Thus, in 2000, when Distance Education & Community Network looked for a more effective means of educating the English students in isolated regions, it looked to Wimba and its collaborative software for online education.

[www.wimba.com](http://www.wimba.com)

In 2003 the Ministry of Education in Quebec amalgamated three separate educational projects that supported the English education sector in the province: Quebec English Schools Network (QESN), Learning Materials Centre, and Distance Education & Community Network (DECN). The three groups became LEARN.

LEARN, an educational foundation supported by funding from the Quebec-Canada Entente for Minority Language Education, leads the charge when it comes to Wimba and other instructional technologies. LEARN offers e-learning services and support to all of Quebec's English school boards, private schools, community organizations and the private sector in rural and urban settings within the province.



Leading English Education and Research Network (LEARN)  
Montreal, Quebec, Canada  
[www.learnquebec.ca](http://www.learnquebec.ca)

### WIMBA PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

- Wimba Classroom

### KEY BENEFITS

- Save significant time and money by not traveling to school board meetings
- Students in rural areas are engaged
- Easiest means of offering tutoring and professional development sessions to persons through all of Quebec
- Children of Cirque de Soleil performers in Tokyo receive Quebec education

**Red asterisks are LEARN teaching sites throughout the expanses of Quebec**





Leading English Education and  
Research Network (LEARN)  
Montreal, Quebec, Canada  
[www.learnquebec.ca](http://www.learnquebec.ca)

## WHAT THEY'RE SAYING

*"We use Wimba to teach everyone how to teach differently. We've been meeting online to develop new teaching styles."*

*-Margaret Dupuis, Director of E-Learning*

It also supports and promotes pedagogical collaboration and innovation using information technology, works to model best practices, and publishes quality learning materials to support educators who are implementing competency-based practices in the classroom. Of course, several of LEARN's most important programs rely on Wimba.

According to Tim Scobie, Technical Manager of LEARN, its E-Learning division has a mandate to offer quality e-learning services and support for teachers, students, schools and administration. This foundation has established a technological infrastructure which provides educational experiences through online models of delivery.

The model allows for real-time instruction, collaboration and training of educators and students, via Wimba anytime, anywhere, as well as access to learning resources through the LEARN website.

Specifically, each school year, LEARN assists many of the province's English schools by providing, at a minimum, online courses in the areas of Math, Science, and Social Studies. In fact, most recently LEARN teachers taught History, Sciences, Math, Media Studies, French and English as a Second Language to more than 300 students across Quebec in grades 9-11. And the teaching and learning doesn't stop there.

"We also teach to several specialty schools within Montreal, one of which is for young women with children and another in a cultural area of Montreal where, in the past, young women were not encouraged to graduate," says Margaret Dupuis, Director of E-Learning at LEARN. "These schools lacked math and sciences and LEARN provided access to physics and chemistry."

In addition to standard K-11 curriculum, one of LEARN's most popular programs is its Online Tutorials and Homework Help project, during which teachers offer online tutorials as well as exam preparation at the end of each semester in all subject areas. Via Wimba, experienced teachers from around the province help students with their homework and exam preparation at different intervals throughout the school year. While a teacher might be logged in from Shawville, his or her student may be logged in from anywhere throughout Quebec.

Three nights a week, teachers are online for two hours per night, and in the Fall of 2007, 900 students registered for this program. The students represented all grades from elementary to grade 11. Elementary school teachers met with five or six students a night, three nights per week. "That's a huge plus for our students and our community," Scobie says. "Students and parents in the elementary sector can login to get help with student homework".

In addition to online classes and tutorials for students, LEARN also utilizes Wimba to offer numerous teacher professional development sessions and administrative meetings online. For instance, Dianne Conrod, principal for LEARN, leads all staff meetings, and training sessions online using Wimba. "Quebec is in the middle of a huge educational reform, QEP (Quebec Education Program)," Scobie explains. "It's all about teaching kids how to solve problems. It means we have to change our teaching styles."

"The Quebec region is so spread out it's expensive and difficult to get people into one place to train them," says Dupuis. "It's easy to train someone for a day but you need the follow-up and the support afterwards, and that's difficult with distance."



Leading English Education and  
Research Network (LEARN)  
Montreal, Quebec, Canada  
[www.learnquebec.ca](http://www.learnquebec.ca)

## WHAT THEY'RE SAYING

*"Wimba's a huge plus for our students and our community. Students and parents in the elementary sector can login to get help with student homework."*

*-Tim Scobie, Technical Manager*

## ABOUT WIMBA

Wimba develops web-based collaboration software designed for online education, language learning and live interactive communications. Our collaborative applications enable learning professionals to fully embrace the new wave of teaching and learning opportunities afforded by the Internet; regardless of geographic location, bandwidth or operating system. Our classroom collaboration solutions enable educators to conduct live, online classes, meetings, office hours and other collaborations, and our language learning tools add oral interaction directly into course content, web-pages, study groups and assessments. With simplicity and power, Wimba adds new dimensions to online, accessible education, enhancing the learning experience for both students and instructors.

The furthest school in Western Quebec is a six-hour drive away and others must fly (see map). An annual meeting in Laval requires that some teachers must travel over 10 hours to meet."

Most of LEARN's receiving sites are in local schools in the students' hometowns. LEARN and Wimba help the students stay at home to complete their high school education. During the last three years Quebec had been building a fiber optic backbone to improve the connectivity to these schools. The Littoral School Board is still coming through on a dial-up connection and satellite dish access. "We work in a rural community which provides us with a good understanding of what these schools are experiencing," Dupuis adds.

Dupuis also mentions that Quebec is now moving away from traditional grade levels and is moving towards grouping students together. "We're now using cycles. Secondary Cycle 1 is grades 7 and 8 and Cycle 2 is grades 9, 10, and 11. It changes how teaching is done so we use Wimba to teach everyone how to teach differently. We've been meeting online to develop new teaching styles."

LEARN's Board of Directors comes from across province to meet online as well. Since LEARN's mission is to provide access to quality learning material, educational technology, and e-learning resources in a timely responsive manner to the Quebec English Education Community, it only makes sense that the administration utilizes Wimba for its provincial meetings. "I want to get school board commissioners to meet online too," Scobie says. "We've got one commissioner that travels five hours per meeting. It would be ideal if he didn't have to travel at all."

However, even some of the most resistant administrators are starting to come around.

"Western Quebec is building a new board office. Its Assistant Director General was out of town on business so we had a couple of building facilities meetings on Wimba. I had him logged in from a location in the UK, some other folks were in Ottawa and Kingston, and I was in Shawville. I uploaded pictures of floor plans and electronics and we covered all points. The ADG was impressed that we could have a meeting to discuss the design of a new building, make notes on the plans, save them and send them to the contractors. The time saved and the low cost of the meeting introduced this team to a new and very functional way of doing this type of business meeting. They thought you had to use video conferencing to teach online; but now they get it. With the rising cost of travel (\$1.35/litre for gasoline), the school boards see the need for commissioners to meet more from home instead of driving in."

Finally, the Eastern Townships School Board (ETSB) has a teaching relationship with Cirque de Soleil that enables 30 elementary and high school children of Cirque de Soleil performers in Tokyo to take a "complete Quebec education." ETSB supplies the teachers and LEARN supplies the platform while seven teachers conduct the instruction. This is yet another example of LEARN bending over backwards to teach, support, and connect the children of Quebec.