

	<h2 style="margin: 0;">Alberta</h2> <p>Population – 3,632,483 Total Area – 661,848 km² Population Density – 5.49 people/km² Capital (Population) – Edmonton (730,372) Number of K–12 Schools – 2,128 (2009-10) Number of K–12 Students – 585,397 (2009-10) Number of K–12 Distance Education Programmes – 16 Number of K–12 Distance Education Students – 21,339</p>
---	---

Category	Yes/No	Comments
Province-led programme	No	
Other online programmes	Yes	
Provincial-level policy	Yes	Additional legislation has been introduced

Distance Programmes

At present there is a single province-wide programme administered by the Pembina Hills Regional School Division, the Alberta Distance Learning Centre (ADLC). ADLC offers courses in a variety of formats (e.g., print, online, and blended formats) and also manages the Vista Virtual School and *Centre francophone d'éducation à distance*. In 2010–11, the ADLC had 9,756 students enrolled in one or more courses at the secondary level and approximately 4,700 students enrolled in grades 1 through 9.

In addition to this province-wide programme, there are also a series of district-based programmes, supported by the various public and Catholic school districts in the province (Alberta has Catholic school districts that are publicly funded). These include Argyll Centre, Aspen View Virtual School, Battle River Online, Buffalo Trail Students Online, Golden Hills Virtual School, Holy Family Cyber High School, Innovative Learning Services, InterEd, Peace Academy of Virtual Education, Revelation Online, Rocky View Virtual School, School of Hope, St. Gabriel Cyber School, and St. Paul's Academy Centre for Learning®Home, among others. These district-based programmes accounted for an additional 6,883 students.

Lastly, there is an Aboriginal-focused online school: SunChild E-Learning Community.

Governance and Regulation

At present, the *School Act* grants the Minister of Education the authority to make regulations with respect to public and private distance education programmes. The Ministry has yet to exert that authority beyond outlining some specific requirements primarily related to the amount of required instructional time as a part of their annual *Guide to Education*. That same document also advises school authorities that wish to undertake distance education programmes that they will need to

consider how to define, accommodate, or manage things like attendance, the role of the parents, staffing, workload issues, instructional support, student evaluation, delivery formats, technical support, delivering standardized exams, and non-resident students, etc.

In June 2010 the Ministry released *Inspiring Action on Education*, outlining the policy directions within the broader context of provincial government strategies and initiatives aimed at building a stronger future for Alberta. *Inspiring Action on Education* established a discussion framework for the vision, values, principles, and policy directions for transforming Alberta's education system. Feedback was sought regarding whether the directions were on the right track for transforming the education system. In *Inspiring Action on Education*, digital technologies are viewed as tools to enable different ways of learning and in transforming student learning experiences by doing things that would not be possible in classrooms using traditional learning tools. As a part of the consultant process, the Ministry produced a series of Transformation Guides in the areas of Parental and Community Engagement, Shared Governance, Student-Centred Education, Learning Opportunities, Teaching our Children, and Envisioning Excellence, to allow for public feedback from June to October 2010, along with a survey to generate additional input from the public. Based on that feedback, the Ministry generated reports on each of these topics and a report summarising the survey responses; those reports were made public in December 2010. At present, this initiative to transform education in Alberta appears to have been included in the Government's Spring 2011 legislative agenda.

This past April, the Government introduced an education bill that did not specifically mention distance or distributed learning programmes, but included this text in its preamble:

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta recognizes the importance of enabling high quality and socially engaging learning opportunities with flexible timing and pacing through a range of learning environments to meet diverse student needs and to maximize student success;

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta is committed to providing choice to students in education programs and methods of learning;

While this is not an indication that the Government plans to increase the amount of online and blended learning that is occurring in the province, Alberta is the only province to have legislation that authorises the operation of charter schools and the only province where K–12 distance education is flourishing in the absence of any real regulation or governance of the delivery model. This legislation, along with the vision presented in the *Inspiring Action on Education* policy document, could indicate a greater push toward these online and blended learning alternatives.