



4.10 British Columbia (BC)

Pop: 4,581,978

K–12 Schools: 1,942

K–12 Students: 638,835

of K–12 DE Programmes: 74

of K–12 DE Students: 78,168

K–12 distance education in Canada began in British Columbia in 1919, when the province began offering correspondence education to students living in isolated parts of the province. This centralized system of correspondence education continued until 1984, when the province began to establish the first of nine regional correspondence schools. K–12 online learning began in British Columbia in 1993, with the introduction of New Directions in Distance Learning and the EBUS Academy. By 1994, the responsibility for distance education had largely shifted to individual school districts.

Distance Programmes

In 2012–13 there were 56 district-level public distributed learning schools and 18 independent (or private) distributed learning schools that enrolled approximately 78,000 unique students in one or more courses. LearnNowBC continues to serve as a Web portal and single point of entry to information about public distributed learning schools for students, parents and educators in the province. Additionally, Open School BC provides provincial content and online hosting services on a cost-recovery model to Boards without the capacity or desire to manage their own.

Governance and Regulation

The distributed learning landscape in British Columbia has remained relatively stable over the past year. The legislative language in section 3.1 and section 75 (4.1) of the School Act, 2006, as well as section 8.1 of the Independent School Act, 2006, still govern the operation of distributed learning programmes. Both pieces of legislation contain similar language concerning the establishment of distributed learning schools “only with the prior agreement of the minister.” As such, these agreements between the Ministry and the school districts or independent schools serve as the main governance documents for distributed learning in British Columbia. In addition to these agreements, the Ministry also has a series of policy documents that outline the regulations that distributed learning schools must follow.

One regulatory change that has occurred focuses on altering the way that graduated adults are provided services under the province's Education Guarantee. Graduated adults enrolled in distance education after May 2012 may select courses from a specified list of funded courses. As well, the enrolling district receives a portion of the funding upon enrolment and the remainder upon completion of the course. Prior to May 2012, distributed learning schools received full enrolment funding for graduated adults taking any provincial or approved local course.

Another legislative change that was enacted during the 2012–13 school year was a provision in Bill 36 that provides flexible learning choices for all students. Provincial stakeholders have been consulted to help design an implementation plan for this legislation.

Vignette: The British Columbia Distributed Learning Administrators' Association



The British Columbia Distributed Learning Administrators' Association (BCDLAA) is a relatively new organization. It was established in the fall of 2010 at the annual Distributed Learning Administrators' meeting sponsored by the British Columbia Ministry of Education. The BCDLAA was conceived as an organization whose purpose is "to coordinate and promote the interests of Public Distributed Learning in the province of British Columbia in all its facets" (BCDLAA Constitution, 2011).

Membership in the BCDLAA is open to all public school districts, which include distributed learning schools within their ranks. The administrators of said schools are eligible for individual membership in the Association. Specific projects of the BCDLAA have included:

- Co-hosting the British Columbia Distributed Learning Spring Conference
- Attracting delegates and presenters from British Columbia and beyond
- Co-hosting various provincial meetings
- Advising the Ministry of Education on a number of policy and legislative initiatives
- Participating in a variety of meetings to discuss the provincial Education Compliance Audit programme
- Representing British Columbia's distributed learning community at various national and international conferences and meetings.

Distributed Learning in British Columbia is an ever-evolving field, both from the perspective of best practice and from the perspective of governing policies as established by the British Columbia Ministry of Education. The BCDLAA serves as a vehicle through which new and experienced administrators can pose their questions about policy and share ideas about best practice in annual face-to-face meetings, in monthly online meetings and via the BCDLAA website's discussion forums (<http://bcdlaa.ca>). There are also opportunities for discussion about what role distributed learning will play within the context of the British Columbia Education Plan. As "flipped classrooms" and

“blended learning” become more mainstream and as the focus on trades education and secondary/post-secondary partnerships takes a more prominent place in the educational landscape, distributed learning is uniquely positioned to support colleagues in neighbourhood schools and to provide students with a myriad of opportunities. The BCDLAA is committed to supporting distributed learning administrators as they navigate new waters and to providing educational leadership to the dedicated distributed learning teachers in British Columbia.