

2.3.2 Saskatchewan

Saskatchewan is the middle of the three prairie provinces. It has a population of 1,023,810 (Statistics Canada, 2009), with the capital Regina having approximately one fifth of that population. It should be noted that Saskatoon is actually the largest city in the province, and also has approximately one fifth of the population. The province has a total area of just over 651,900 km², two thirds of which is the Labrador portion. This represents a population density of 1.67/km².

K-12 Online Learning

Category	Yes/No	Comments
Province-led programme	No	
Other online programmes	Yes	
Provincial-level policy	No	

Online Programmes

Historically, Saskatchewan has had a system of K-12 distance education much like Manitoba where the Ministry was responsible for the delivery of courses through online — asynchronous and synchronous, televised via satellite, and print-based courses. Distance education enrolment in these three methods of delivery was 1,933 students in 2006-07, 2,144 students in 2007-08, and 2,272 students in 2008-09.

Beginning on July 3, 2009 the Ministry devolved the responsibility for distance education to the school divisions. From 2001 to 2007, the Ministry had worked extensively with teachers, schools, and school divisions to build teacher capacity to build websites and to teach online. As such, most school divisions had already built the infrastructure and had the staff capacity to provide their own distance learning. The Ministry provided additional transition funding in 2008-09 to assist school divisions in taking over courses that had been offered by the Ministry. At present, most of the 29 school divisions have some sort of distance education programme going within their own division.

There has been no additional “building capacity” funding since the announcement that the Ministry would no longer be delivering distance education. Having said that, some school divisions were not as far along as others; so there is provision for these school divisions to purchase distance education service from another school division. Those that are willing to provide courses or spaces to students outside of their own school division list that offering at the Saskatchewan Distance Learning Course Repository. At present there are 14 school divisions that have indicated a willingness and capacity to enrol students from other school divisions in one of the 67 courses available.

Provincial Policies

At present there are no specific legislation or regulations that govern K-12 distance education in Saskatchewan. There is one reference “to provide educational courses to all areas of Saskatchewan through the use of distance-education technology” under the Technology Supported Revolving Fund section of the *Education Act*, however, that has become a moot section with the devolution of distance education services from the Ministry.

Funding

The Ministry no longer provides funding for K-12 distance education and school divisions are responsible for funding their own programmes through their per pupil funding allocation they receive from the Government. School divisions that have extra capacity and allow students from other school divisions to enrol in their courses typically charge a registration fee of \$300 to \$500 — depending on the method of distance delivery — which is paid by the student, the student’s school, or their school division.

Governance, Tracking, and Accountability

While there are no specific provincial policies that govern K-12 distance education in Saskatchewan, the provincial student record system does include a field that identifies when a course is being offered by some mode of distance delivery. This would allow the Ministry to make comparisons of student performance based on methods of course delivery.

Quality Assurance, Teaching, and Curriculum

It is the belief of the Ministry of Education that delivery of a course involves an interaction among the student, the teacher, the instructional materials and the curriculum — and the mode of delivery is, or should be, irrelevant. The role of the Ministry of Education is to develop the curriculum; and our expectation is that teachers are delivering it, whether in a face-to-face classroom or at a distance.