



## 4.8 Saskatchewan (SK)

Pop: 1,108,303

# K–12 Schools: 774

# K–12 Students: 169,939

# of K–12 DE Programmes: ~21

# of K–12 DE Students: 2,611

Historically, Saskatchewan has had a system of K–12 distance education where the Ministry was responsible for the delivery of courses through online, televised via satellite and print-based courses. However, in 2009–10 the Ministry devolved the responsibility for distance education to the school divisions. Since that time, the Ministry has worked to ensure that teachers, schools and school divisions were able to build their own capacity to provide distance learning.

### ***Distance Programmes***

During the 2011–12 school year, 11 of the 28 school divisions operated and/or participated in some sort of distance education programme. Further, the Saskatchewan Distance Learning website listed a total of 14 participating programmes as offering distance learning opportunities for students. According to the Ministry, these programmes enabled 3,706 course enrolments from 2,611 distinct students.

### ***Governance and Regulation***

The only reference to distance education in the Education Act is related to the Technology Supported Revolving Fund, which indicates that it is to be used “to provide educational courses to all areas of Saskatchewan through the use of distance-education technology.” This section is no longer relevant with the devolution of distance education services from the Ministry.

### ***Vignette: Horizon School Division***

The Distance Education Academy Conference of Saskatchewan (DE Academy) had a very humble beginning some five years ago as an informal sharing opportunity between Distance Education Coordinators, Thad Swidzinski of the North East School Division and Jim Swan of Horizon School Division. Thad, a true distance education pioneer within Saskatchewan, shared a distance education

model that truly enabled small rural schools to be leaders—it was a vision that Horizon wanted as well. Soon it was evident that there was a need for a broader share of distance education programmes, best practices and resources. Ted Green of the Northern Lights School Division invited all DE Coordinators to meet and share knowledge of the programmes that were active within Saskatchewan. It was very evident that there was a strong desire to share and support each other; through a grassroots effort, the DE Academy was established to provide a provincial entity where we could collaborate, share and gain professional development.

DE Academy 2013  
Serving students of Saskatchewan one byte at a time!



From a very small conference of 30 attendees and five school divisions in the first year, the DE Academy conference and DE Administrator/Coordinators group has steadily grown in the past four years to roughly

80 attendees who collectively represent 12 partner divisions, one community college and several private partners. The Academy has also recently established a Moodle hub hosted by the Prairie South School Division, where courses and learning activities are shared.

Joan Coy is a fifteen-year veteran principal at the Peace Academy of Virtual Education (PAVE) in Alberta. Since the academy's inception, Coy has been an absolute rock and essential ingredient to the success of Saskatchewan's DE Academy conferences. Having spoken provincially, nationally and internationally on topics relating to teaching mathematics, science, online education, Moodle and assessment, Joan has brought a wealth of knowledge and experience.

Some of the professional development themes that the Academy has addressed are: social constructivism and assessment, instructional design, interactive learning and inquiry (focused and personalized enrichment), distance education vision and goals, quality tools for assessment, collaboration and communication and distance education best practices and supervision.

It has been very interesting to see the models of distance education delivery transform over the past few years. Many divisions are moving towards more of a centralized model. Core subject areas such as Math and Science are being designed and offered by larger schools to smaller schools in both synchronous and asynchronous formats, allowing the ability to provide more subject offerings to the smaller rural schools. Many schools even have designated a distance education principal as well, who oversees their programmes.