



4.11 Yukon (YT)

Pop: 36,700

K–12 Schools: 28

K–12 Students: 5,122

of K–12 DE Programmes: 74

of K–12 DE Students: 78,168

As the Yukon Territory follows the same curriculum as British Columbia, the territory has a long history of utilizing distance education programmes from British Columbia. One of the longstanding partnerships has been with the Northern British Columbia Distance Education School. Additionally, the territory has been developing an internal video conferencing distance education programme for the past decade.

Distance Programmes

In the 2012–13 school year, four high-school courses were again offered via videoconference to rural students. Additionally, the Yukon established its own virtual school in September 2013 called the Aurora Virtual School. Aurora Virtual School will facilitate courses, provide support and direction for distributed learning and home education students in the Yukon Territory. Further, the territory embarked on a blended learning pilot project with one of its rural high schools. As a part of this pilot project, all the grade 10–12 students and teachers have been supplied with a laptop—a portion of their courses are done online with a teacher at their side, using the Moodle learning management system. Finally, the Yukon pursued partnerships with five additional British Columbia distributed learning schools to increase course choices available to students.

During the 2012–13 school year, there were 81 in-school students beginning to take distributed learning courses, seven in-school students who were continuing on with distributed learning courses and 63 home education students doing formal distributed learning courses. One hundred and fifty-one students in total were participating in distributed learning programmes.

Governance and Regulation

There have been no recent changes to the governance and regulation of K–12 distance education in the Yukon. The *Education Act, 2002* still allows the Minister of Education to provide distance education

courses and charge fees for students to access those courses. However, the 2003 decision to provide these distributed learning courses at no cost to students up to the age of 21 continues to be followed.

The Department of Education also continues to govern the operation of individual distance education programmes in the Yukon through individual Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) that it signs with each individual programme. For example, the territory is in the process of finalizing additional MOUs with the five new school districts in British Columbia to create partnerships with their respective distributed learning schools to provide course access to Yukon students. Finally, Yukon Education was granted associate membership in the British Columbia Learning Network (BCLN) consortium.

Vignette: Watson Lake Secondary School

Watson Lake Secondary School is located in Watson Lake, Yukon. Watson Lake has a population of approximately 1,200 residents and the school has a population of approximately 85 students in grade 8 to 12. As the principal of the high school, I found that the students complained about their lack of choices for courses. Academically motivated students were not able to get the classes that they might have needed for university entrance to programmes that required prerequisite subjects such as physics, psychology, chemistry, French etc. Students that were not as academically inclined felt that they were not able to take classes that interested them, but instead were forced to take whatever courses were offered simply because they needed the credits to meet the requirements to graduate. In our old model, most of these students could not take electives they were interested in because many of the electives were timetabled next to a required course that they needed to complete grad requirements. Because of our staff numbers and small population I was unable to offer required courses more than once a school year. This lack of choice in course selection and the inherent control over students' education that it entails contributed to a lack of student engagement in school. It also contributed to low attendance rates, with some students leaving our community to attend different schools to enrich their education.



The staff members were very motivated and interested in pursuing a different educational model to try to address some of concerns arising from these issues. We started discussion around a blended model for instruction that would allow the school to offer the required courses eight times during a school year. This would allow students to pick the electives that they were interested in and then fill in their required courses. The blended learning model that we are using involves course content and resources being delivered on the Moodle platform, with a teacher in the classroom to provide direct student support, highlight key course concepts and provide lessons open to all grade areas on important subject specific skills.

There are two types of “dens”—similar to homerooms—in our School. The Humanities den offers English 10, English 11, English 12, Social Studies 10 and Social Studies 11. The Math/Science den offers Applications Work Math 10, Applications of Work Math 11, Foundations of Math 10, Math 11, Math 12 and Science 10. Students are required to attend each class at the time specified in the timetable. Once they are in class, working through course material is self-directed, with a teacher available to help them when they need it.

The course selection and the ability to work from anywhere are fostering a shift in our school culture. With students empowered by their direct input into course programming, they have become active participants in their own educational planning and are discovering a newfound relevance in their schoolwork. This new connection between personal areas of interest and educational programming has become one of the key factors driving the cultural shift within our school. We are slowly becoming able to offer the programming choices of a large urban high school, with the small class size and personal attention available in a small rural school context.