

## 3.10 British Columbia (BC)

*Population: 4,683,139*

*Number of K-12 Schools: 1930*

*Number of K-12 Students: 635,037*

*Number of K-12 E-Learning Programs: 75*

*Number of K-12 E-Learning Students: 69,735*



### K-12 E-Learning Programs

In 2015-16 there were 59 district-level public distributed learning schools (distance education providers) and 16 independent (or private) distributed learning schools that enrolled approximately 69,735 unique students in one or more courses. LearnNowBC has ceased operations, and its main services to schools (e.g., school, course, trades finders and *Collaborate*) have been transferred to the Ministry and are operated by Open School BC. Additionally, Open School BC also provides provincial content and online hosting services on a cost-recovery model to school districts lacking the capacity or desire to manage their own.

The Ministry of Education has not yet begun to gather data on blended learning programs, but can report anecdotally that blended learning is on the increase. At present, the BC Learning Network, a consortium of school districts providing online courses in distributed learning schools, is in year two of its major content development three-year plan with the goal of creating online content and digital resources that can be used in all school learning environments.

### Governance and Regulation

The distributed learning landscape in British Columbia has remained relatively stable over the past years. 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 programs. 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.

In 2013, minor changes were made to legislation and funding to allow students in grades 8 and 9 to enroll in both a program at a neighbourhood school as well as courses provided by a distributed learning school, as long as the distributed learning school is operated by another school district.

The current funding model in British Columbia does not differentiate between distributed learning and blended learning, or between face-to-face and blended learning. However, there are different funding amounts for face-to-face courses and programs, as compared to distributed learning courses. Under the current policy, the delivery method is considered distributed learning as long as the student is at a distance from the teacher for the majority of the time. A “majority of the time” is not explicitly defined under the current regulations.

[Note that there is a new vignette from British Columbia available at the <http://k12sotn.ca/bc/> focused on the Abbotsford Virtual School. In the vignette, we learn about how Abbotsford Virtual School, one of many BC Distributed Learning Schools, began to adopt a blended learning program based on a STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) program and moved to an inquiry-based, technology enhanced and socially engaging program.]