



Population: 4,286,134
Number of K-12 Schools: 2,388
Number of K-12 Students: 719,889

Number of K-12 E-Learning Programs: 32
Number of K-12 E-Learning Students: 80,359

Governance and Regulation

At present, the *School Act* grants the Minister of Education the authority to make regulations with respect to distance education programs. The Ministry defines online learning as:

a structured learning environment in which students engage with their teachers in one or more courses online. The planning and implementation of instruction, as well as the assessment of student learning in relation to the outcomes from the Alberta programs of study, is the responsibility of Alberta certificated teachers employed by a school authority. (Government of Alberta, 2017, p. 80)

Alberta Education is currently developing an online learning toolkit that will provide guidance and direction for families, teachers and school/system leaders.

The Ministry also tracks specific distance and online learning programs/schools through the Provincial Education Directory (see <https://education.alberta.ca/online-learning/online-learning-directory/>). Enrolment in these programs are tracked through the use of specific codes in the Provincial Approach to Student Information systems. At present, there are currently three specific coding mechanisms for tracking online enrolments.

1. Schools may indicate on their annual operating plans that they offer an online program.
2. Courses may be identified as virtual and distance learning in provincial student information systems.
3. Students who are completing the majority of their courses online can be identified as such using the online learning student enrolment code.

However, Alberta Education is aware that some schools and school authorities may not use the appropriate coding for distance and online courses and is working with school authorities to increase awareness and improve accuracy in the assignment of student and program codes for online and distance learning programs.

Distance and online learning are also funded differently than brick-and-mortar education. The *Funding Manual for School Authorities* prescribes funding mechanisms that are that are not available when a student is enrolled as an online learning student (e.g., Plant, Operations and Maintenance; Infrastructure Maintenance and Renewal; etc.). Further, a school authority must be able to demonstrate how 950 hours of distance/online ‘access’ for elementary and junior high students and 1000 hours of distance/online ‘access’ for senior high students is being met in order to ensure requirements are met to be eligible for funding.

K-12 Distance and Online Learning Activity

At present, Alberta Education is aware of 32 different distance and/or online learning programs. While most of these are focused at the school division level, there are two programs that are provincial in scope (the Alberta Distance Learning Centre and the *Centre francophone d'éducation à distance*).

Based on the information in the provincial tracking system, during the 2017-18 school year there were 372 schools that indicated on their operational forms that they had students enrolled in an online program. Additionally, 55 schools used the virtual course enrolment code, 13 schools used the print-based distance education course enrolment code, and 69 schools used the online learning student enrolment code. Overall, there were a total of 11,897 students coded as online learning, as well as 8,634 print-based distance education course enrolments and 71,725 virtual course enrolments for the 2017-18 school year.

K-12 Blended Learning Activity

A blended program in Alberta has historically been defined as a student's education program that consists of two parts: where the school-authority is responsible for the student's education program, and where the parent is responsible for their child's education program. In 2017-18, Alberta Education will be transitioning this terminology to "shared responsibility" in order to identify programs where the school authority and parent share responsibility for the child's program. This change will allow Alberta to become more aligned with the current e-learning vernacular.

Alberta Education does not collect enrolment data for blended learning, and there was only one program that completed the annual *Individual Program Survey* who provided blended learning data. The Alberta blendED Symposium, a conference focused on fostering the growth of quality blended learning opportunities for student in Alberta, has been organized annually since 2015.