



3.7 Manitoba (MB)

Population: 1,369,000

Number of K-12 Schools: 810

Number of K-12 Students: 208,796

Number of K-12 E-Learning Programs: ~38

Number of K-12 E-Learning Students: ~11,875

Governance and Regulation

The only reference in the *Public Schools Act* regarding distance education is mention that the Minister of Education can approve courses of study, including correspondence and other courses. Distance Learning is defined by Manitoba Education as:

- a method of accessing courses of study even though learners and their teachers, instructors, or tutor/markers may be in different physical locations; and
- programs that provide flexibility and equitable access to diverse learning opportunities, while at the same time respects local community decisions regarding program implementation.

Manitoba Education has issued other regulatory and policy documents: Independent Study Option (ISO), Teacher Mediated Option (TMO) and Web-Based Course (WBC) Option. In 2014, Manitoba Education created a framework that allowed for virtual collegiates to operate in the province. To date, the Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre and the Pembina Trails and St. James-Assiniboia School Divisions have signed an Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with the Province and have been granted school codes for their virtual collegiates.

The Manitoba Student Records system does have a mechanism to indicate whether the credit earned was obtained through some form of distance education, but this method of data collection is dependent on the individual schools categorizing and entering the data correctly. By default, most schools report the credit as earned in a traditional manner, regardless of the method of instruction. As such, the data reported here may be significantly lower than the actual involvement in distance or online learning.

For the most part, distance and learning options are funded in a manner similar to brick-and-mortar education with a few exceptions. Students enrolled in the ISO are required to pay for each course registration, although for students attending a school within Manitoba it is at the school's discretion whether the fees are reimbursed in full, in part, or not at all. There is a fee per seat that is collected for the TMO, and the consortium that operates this option has established a fee structure for both members and non-members. Finally, the InformNet Virtual Collegiate has established a fee structure that depends on the student's residency and status. Students that reside within the governing school divisions are not charged fees, but students from outside of the school division – as well as homeschooling students and adult learners – are charged fees.

K-12 Distance and Online Learning Activity

Each school division in the province has participated in one or more of the above distance education program options. However, participation varies from year to year depending on the changing needs of students and schools. The ISO (i.e., print) continued to offer 58 courses in English and 12 courses in French for grades 9-12 students. During the 2018-19 school year, there were approximately 3,196 active students enrolled and 1,436.5 credits issued. The TMO, which is managed by rural school divisions through the TMO Consortium in partnership with Manitoba Education and Training, offered 21 English courses for grades 9-12 students. During the 2018-19 school year, there were 418 course enrolments from 21 different schools from eight different rural or northern school divisions/groups. Finally, during the 2018-19 school year, there were an estimated 7,500 students enrolled in the WBC Option.

K-12 Blended Learning Activity

Manitoba Education does not have a formal definition of blended learning. However, it is informally recognized as a combination of traditional (i.e., face-to-face) classroom teaching/learning and online teaching/learning.

In an effort to support blended learning throughout the province, Manitoba Education licenses the *Blackboard Learn* learning management system, and makes it available to Manitoba teachers to use for free with both distance or blended learning students and as a resource (provincially developed 9-12 courses). Schools, and individual teachers, within the province are responsible for their own teaching/learning programs and interpretation of blended learning. Teachers will use online applications that suit the needs of their students and their learning environment/lessons.

Manitoba Education does not formally track participation in blended learning. The Province did conduct a survey in summer 2017 that found schools were using a variety of implementation methods to support students within a blended classroom environment and from a distance, but there was no accounting or estimate of the actual blended learning activity.