



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: ~13,749

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 55 courses in English and 13 courses in French for grades 9-12 students. During the 2019-20 school year, there were approximately 3,921 active students enrolled and 1,602 credits issued. The TMO, which is managed by rural school divisions through the TMO Consortium in partnership with Manitoba Education and Training, during the 2019-20 school year there were 328 course enrolments from 17 different schools and 315 credits issued.

Finally, during the 2019-20 school year, there were an estimated 9,500 students enrolled in the WBC Option. Beginning April 6, 2020, all new WBC offerings were delivered using a new learning management system, *Brightspace by Desire2Learn (D2L)*. *Blackboard Learn* continued to be available for delivery of existing courses until June 30, 2020.

K-12 Blended Learning Activity

During the 2019-20 school year Manitoba Education adopted a formal definition of blended learning. “Blended Learning is a combination of traditional face-to-face classroom learning and online/remote learning” (Manitoba Education, 2020, para 1).

In an effort to further support blended learning throughout the province, Manitoba Education added a “Blended Learning” page to the traditional “Distance Learning” section of the Manitoba Education website. This new resource provides teachers and school leaders with advantages, tips, examples, useful tools, and resources. Manitoba teachers were still able to use the learning management system for free with both distance or blended learning students and its provincially developed grade 9-12 courses as a resource.

Manitoba Education still 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.

Emergency Remote Teaching

Schools closed on March 20, 2020 and remote teaching began on March 30. Manitoba Education launched their remote teaching and learning resource website, and for students with limited access to digital technologies and/or the internet the Ministry provided printed materials. Teachers were required to provide daily communication with students via telephone, email, or online platform. Secondary students could choose a blend of print-based or online forms, and had access to *InformNet* and other online resources or print-based modules. There were attendance expectations, and report cards were delivered but only reflected work completed before March 23 with the opportunity to improve. Beginning June 1, under a *Limited Use of Facilities*

mandate, teachers and students had opportunities to meet face-to-face for assessment and planning purposes, but most continued with remote teaching.