



Saskatchewan (SK)

Population: 1,179,844

Number of K-12 Schools: 774

Number of K-12 Students: 186,084

Number of K-12 Distance Learning Programs: 36

Number of K-12 Distance Learning Students: 19,142

Governance and Regulation

At present, there is no reference to distance education, online learning, or blended education in *The Education Act, 1995*. In recent history, the delivery of distance education, online learning, and blended learning has been guided by the Saskatchewan Technology in Education Framework (TEF), which outlines the roles and responsibilities of the education sector with regards to the use of technology in education. It contains a number of outcomes and indicators, in particular that school divisions ensure distance and online learning opportunities are available to students, that intra- and inter-school division learning opportunities are available to students with local support provided, that distance learners have success rates that are equivalent to students in traditional classroom environments, and that assistive technology and technical support is available to students with intensive needs and/or school personnel supporting them.

Beyond the legislative and regulatory environment, the Ministry of Education also tracks distance education/online learning registrations for Prekindergarten to Grade 12.

Finally, the Ministry continues to develop a policy for in-province distance learning, including provincial definitions for distance education, online learning, and blended learning.

K-12 Distance and Online Learning Activity

As of 2021-22, there were currently 34 provincial schools in 18 school divisions, one independent school, and one First Nation educational authority are categorized as having online learning schools offering Prekindergarten to Grade 12 learning courses to Saskatchewan students. There were 19,142 unique students involved in K-12 distance education or online learning programs in 2021-22. This number is comprised of 9,344 students fully enrolled in a dedicated online school, and 9,798 additional students who registered for at least one course delivered through distance learning.

K-12 Blended Learning Activity

Blended learning is a responsibility of school divisions, as such the Ministry does not monitor this activity.

Remote Learning

Fall 2021 Reopening

Schools across Saskatchewan returned to in-person learning for the 2021-22 school year with a curricular focus on learning loss and without any COVID-19 restrictions. Students who did not return to in-person learning were able to attend Saskatchewan's *Flex Ed* online virtual school. The *Flex Ed* program was in place in the province before the pandemic and is funded by the government. All sports, extra-curricular activities, and drama and music continued but mandatory masking was required in all indoor spaces, including schools. Provincial exams were made optional for this school year (LaBonte et al., 2021).

2021-22 School Year

As the new school year progressed, schools remained open to in-person learning with local closures for COVID outbreaks. Interestingly, the government announced November 22, 2021 amendments to its Education Act “introducing legislation to protect teachers, staff and students while accessing schools... to ensure families can access schools harassment free while vaccines are rolled out for kids 5-11.” With the increasing spread of the Omicron variant across Canada and the province, no separate measures were made regarding school reopening in January as in other provinces and in-person returned as planned earlier. February saw the gradual release of community restrictions across Canada and the Saskatchewan government released the requirement for mandatory masking indoors on February 28, 2022 just after the proof of vaccination requirement expired February 14 (LaBonte et al., 2022).

References

- LaBonte, R., Barbour, M. K., & Mongrain, J. (2022). *Teaching during times of turmoil: Ensuring Continuity of learning during school closures*. Canadian eLearning Network.
<https://canelearn.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Teaching-During-Times-of-Turmoil.pdf>
- LaBonte, R., Barbour, M. K., & Nagle, J. (2021). *Pandemic pedagogy in Canada: Lessons from the first 18 months*. Canadian eLearning Network.
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1gaNFXDCt44W9DaAC9iRAf33pDTKup2C8/view>