



## British Columbia (BC)

Population: 5,437,722

Number of K-12 Schools: 1,950

Number of K-12 Students: 680,013

Number of K-12 Distance Learning Programs: 69

Number of K-12 Distance Learning Students: 68,402

## Governance and Regulation

Historically, the Ministry of Education and Child Care regulated distributed learning through section 3.1 and section 75 (4.1) of the *School Act, 2006* and section 8.1 of the *Independent School Act, 2006*. Beginning in 2018, the province undertook a consultative review that culminated in the passage of the *Education Statutes Amendment Act, 2020*, which changed the School Act and the Independent School Act in three key ways:

1. changed the term “distributed learning” to “online learning;”
2. enabled School Districts and Independent School Authorities to offer online learning courses and programs to some students without an agreement with the Minister
3. required online learning schools to have an agreement with the Minister in order to enroll students from outside their district boundary (i.e.: out-of-district enrolment) or to enroll students who are simultaneously enrolled with another board or independent school authority (i.e., cross enrolment). (Government of British Columbia, 2020)

These changes began in 2021-22 with an “interim” year where former policies were replaced by interim online learning policies that were in effect until June 30, 2023. The 68 online learning schools that held Minister’s agreements at the time were issued interim agreements for the 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years. These schools may continue to cross enroll and/or register out of district students (while also serving local, in-district students) until April 30, 2023.

At the end of the 2022-23 school year, a new Online Learning Model launched on July 1, 2023. In collaboration with Indigenous rightsholders and sector partners, the Ministry developed a single, comprehensive *Online Learning Policy and Interim Procedures Guide*, a governance framework for provincial online learning schools, and an *Accountability and Quality Assurance Framework and Process* (although the latter won't be fully implemented until 2024-25). Following an expression of interest process, 21 public online learning schools operated by 18 boards and 16 independent online learning schools operated by 16 independent school authorities were selected by a review panel to become provincial online learning schools in 2021-22. The regulatory conditions for these provincial online learning schools – both public and independent – require each to sign a Ministerial Agreements to onboard to the new provincial learning management system and adhere to the new *Accountability and Quality Assurance Framework and Process*. A new website, *Online Learning BC* (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2023), launched that allows students and families to search for programs and courses. Finally,

online learning schools without Ministerial agreements are now district online learning schools, which serve students residing within their district boundaries.

Funding for online learning schools differs from traditional brick-and-mortar schools. In brick-and-mortar schools, full-time K-12 students are funded one time in September at 100% for a program of studies. For online learning programs, there are multiple opportunities for funding due to continuous enrolment and cross-enrolment. For Kindergarten to Grade 7 students and Grades 8 to 9 students enrolled in a single school, there are three funding opportunities, depending on when the student meets eligibility requirements:

- September (30th): online learning schools receive 100% of per pupil funding
- February: online learning schools receive 50% of per pupil funding
- May: online learning schools receive 33% of per pupil funding.

For Grades 8 to 9 students who are cross enrolled in an online learning school, the student is funded per enrolled online course(s) in July of the following year at the per course summer school rate. Grades 10 to 12 students are funded per enrolled course and can receive 100% funding in September, February, or May.

During the 2022-23 school year, the basic allocation per student (i.e., full-time equivalent or FTE) attending a public brick-and-mortar school was \$7,885 vs. \$6,360 per public online learning student. Group 1 independent schools received 50% of the public online learning per student amount (i.e., all independent online learning schools in the province have Group 1 Certification)

### **K-12 Distance and Online Learning Activity**

The Ministry tracks student enrolment through the demographic data collections that occur in September, February, and May. These collections show the schools attended along with the demographic characteristics of students and programs provided to students. In 2022-23 there were a total of 69 online learning schools comprised of 21 public provincial online learning schools, 16 independent provincial online learning schools, and 32 district online learning schools that enrolled approximately 68,402 unique students in one or more courses.

### **K-12 Blended Learning Activity**

As online learning is defined as primarily online and/or at a distance, there is implicit acknowledgement of the existence of blended learning in the province. Both online learning and in-person schools are able to offer blended programs. However, the Ministry of Education does not gather data on separate blended learning program enrolment.

### **References**

British Columbia Ministry of Education. (2023). *Online learning BC*.  
<https://search.onlinelearningbc.com/>

Government of British Columbia. (2020). *Education Statutes Amendment Act, 2020*.  
<https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/bills/billsprevious/5th41st:gov08-1>