

California State Profile

Updated October 2023

California has extensive online learning activity through districts, county offices, and charter schools. California does not have a state virtual school, and students access supplemental online courses offered by their district, a district partner, or consortia.

There were 53 online charter schools (including 18 new schools for SY 2022-23) that collectively provide all students in the state access to a full-time online option during the 2022-23 SY. These fully online schools are restricted by a requirement that they serve students in contiguous counties only, so the number of schools is higher than it is in states that allow for statewide online enrollment.

Education management organizations (EMOs) often operate only one fully online school in other states, drawing students from across the state. In California some EMOs operate multiple schools because of the contiguous counties' requirement. The fully online schools enrolled 37,995 students during the 2022-23 SY. The nine California Virtual Academies account for 37% of the 2022-23 SY student enrollments (14,046).

The following illustrates the impact of the pandemic on the virtual charter school student enrollment.

- 27,175 students in SY 2019-20
- 37,334 students in SY 2020-21
- 42,690 students in SY 2021-22
- 37,995 students in SY 2022-23

State virtual school?	YES
Multi-district fully online schools?	YES
State approval process for online providers?	NO
State approval process for online courses?	NO

Next are just a few examples of district virtual programs. Los Angeles USD has six thematic [Virtual Academies](#) based on college and career pathways for grades K-12 including – Arts & Entertainment, Computer Science, International Studies and World Languages, STEAM Business and Entrepreneurship, STEAM Leadership and Public Service, and STEAM

- West Contra Costa Unified offers multiple online options including Vista K-12 [Virtual Academy](#) and through independent study.
- Davis Joint Unified launched its [Virtual Academy](#) for K-12 students that includes multiple online learning options including independent study.
- El Dorado Union High School District's [Pacific Crest Academy](#) is a full-time program serving six regional high schools. It emphasizes STEM curriculum, communication, historical perspectives, internships and early college experience.
- Washington Unified School District's [Virtual Academy](#) provides a full-time option for district students in grades K-8.
- The Elk Grove Unified School District [Virtual Academy](#) serves K-8 students in the Sacramento contiguous counties (Sacramento, Amador, Contra Costa, El Dorado, Placer, San Joaquin, Solano, Sutter and Yolo).
- [Cyber High](#) is a hybrid school operated by the Fresno County Superintendent of Schools and offers online courses for original credit, credit recovery.
- Los Altos School District offers both [hybrid and virtual learning](#) options for elementary and middle school students.

Another path for students to access online learning is through the state's Independent Study program. California Education Code sections [51745–51749.3](#) provide an alternative instructional option that includes various modes of instruction and learning, including online learning. Although the California Department of Education tracks course enrollment data in the independent study and other programs, the latest data posted is from the 2018-19 SY.

In addition to district online programs, the UC Scout from University of California offers online high school Advanced Placement®, “A-G” college preparation online courses, and other online curricula. The University of California (UC) and California State University (CSU) designed “A-G” policy standards that all courses must meet to satisfy the UC and CSU entrance requirements. UC Scout courses may be used to supplement existing curriculum (student self-study) or as supplemental online courses with instruction. UC Scout enrolled 18,610 students in all formats for the 2022-23 SY, mostly high school students using courses for self-study.

A national consortium of public and private agencies, including many in California, fund the [Leading Edge](#) Certification, an effort to address the need for professional development related to digital learning. The project offers training programs for online teachers, classroom (blended learning) teachers, administrators, teacher librarians, and lead learners (course developers) seeking certification in digital skills.

State Policies

Although there is no recent major legislation impacting online and/or blended learning passed through October 2023, virtual charter schools remain impacted by [AB 1505](#) (2019) that put a moratorium on starting any new non-classroom based charter schools. [SB114](#) section 25 (2023) amended AB1505 to extend the moratorium on non-classroom charters to January 1, 2025.

[*DLC State Profile Key Terms*](#)