

The Benefits of Geographic Literacy

“To solve most of the major problems facing our country today -- from wiping out terrorism to minimizing global environmental problems to eliminating the scourge of AIDS -- will require every young person to learn more about other regions, cultures, and languages.”
Former Secretary of State Colin Powell, *Phi Delta Kappan*, November 2004

“Without geography, knowledge about the earth is fragmented and unsatisfactory.”
R. J. Johnson, Professor, University of Bristol

Job and Career Opportunities

- Geography provides training in geospatial technologies (remote sensing, geographic information systems, etc.). This high-growth industry is expected to reach \$30 billion in annual revenues by the end of 2005, up from \$5 billion in 2002, and continuing to grow (*Nature*, January 2004).
- Geospatial technologies are one of the three biggest emerging fields identified by the Department of Labor, and they are providing 75,000 new job hires per year (U.S. Dept. of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, 2004).
- Geographic training provides essential preparation for market researchers, location analysts, and other experts who determine optimum business locations and markets (Association of American Geographers website, 2005).

Economic Competitiveness

- Approximately 20% of U.S. GDP (\$2.3 trillion annually) results from international trade, and many U.S. workers need geographic knowledge for this global economy (*CIA World Factbook*, 2005).
- Geographic knowledge is increasingly needed for U.S. business in international markets. For example, the inadvertent placing of Kashmir outside of Indian territory on a time zone map in the Windows 95 operating system forced Microsoft to conduct a costly recall, fix, and reissue of the software (*Miami Herald*, January 2005).
- Geographic factors play an increasingly important role for business in the globalizing economy – factors such as physical distance, time zones, language differences, and cultural diversity among project teams (O'Hara-Devereaux, *GlobalWork* 1994).

Diversity in America and Abroad

- In 2000, the U. S. population was 70% white, 13% African-American, 13% Hispanic, and 4% Asian. By the year 2050, however, these percentages will be 50% white, 25% Hispanic, 14% African-American, and 8% Asian (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2004).
- The geography classroom has become a primary place where young people in schools with ever more diversity learn about cultures and countries. For example, many school districts in northern Virginia have students who speak over 90 different primary languages (Virginia PTA, 2004).
- Geography teaches about the increasingly important patterns and networks of economic interdependence among nations of the world (National Geography Standards K-12, 1994).
- Geography provides vital knowledge about the international dimensions of trends and issues critical to the lives and livelihoods of all Americans (National Geography Standards K-12, 1994).

The Real-World Relevance of Geography Education

- Integration of geography and literacy in elementary school instruction improves student achievement in literacy as demonstrated on a randomized control trial. Statistically significant results showed an average of 5 percentage points greater learning (*What Works in Geography Education*, 2005).
- Integration of geography and math in elementary school instruction improves student achievement in math as demonstrated in a matched comparison group study. Statistically significant results occurred in student retention of math learning (*What Works in Geography Education*, 2005).