

## The Benefits of Geographic Literacy

### DIVERSITY IN AMERICA AND ABROAD

- In 2010, the U.S. population was 65% white, 16% Hispanic, 12% African-American, and 5% Asian. By the year 2050, however, these percentages will be 46% white, 30% Hispanic, 12% African-American, and 8% Asian (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2012).
- The geography classroom has become the primary place where young people in schools with ever more diversity learn about cultures and countries. Understanding cultures is particularly crucial as school districts have increasingly diverse student populations. For example, 44% of elementary school students in a northern Virginia school district speak a language other than English at home—with more than 100 different languages being spoken by the students (Fairfax County 2011).
- Geography teaches about the increasingly important patterns and networks of economic interdependence among nations of the world (National Geography Standards K-12 2012).
- 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 2012).

### GEOGRAPHY EDUCATION IMPROVES MATH AND LITERACY



***Geography provides students with real-world learning opportunities.***

- Integration of geography and literacy in elementary school instruction improves student achievement in literacy as demonstrated on a randomized control trial. Results showed learning to improve by an average of 5 percentage points (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 knowledge (What Works in Geography Education 2005).

## JOB AND CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

- Geography provides training in geospatial technologies (remote sensing, geographic information systems, and others). This high-growth industry has an estimated worldwide market of \$30 billion—with \$5 billion in the United States alone—and is continuing to grow (DiBiase *et al.* 2011).
- Geospatial technologies are one of the three most important emerging fields identified by the U.S. Department of Labor, and they are providing 32,000 new job hires per year (DiBiase *et al.* 2011).
- Geographic training provides essential preparation for market researchers, location analysts, and other experts who determine optimum business locations and markets (Association of American Geographers 2012).

## ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS

- Approximately 15% of U.S. GDP (\$2.3 trillion annually) results from international trade, and many U.S. workers need geographic knowledge for this global economy.
- Geographic knowledge is increasingly needed for U.S. business in international markets. For example, placing 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 1994).

**“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.”**

**— General Colin Powell  
(Ret.)  
Former  
Secretary of State  
*Phi Delta Kappan***