

# POUDRE SCHOOL DISTRICT GEOGRAPHY STANDARDS AND BENCHMARKS

## INTRODUCTION

***There is an old saying that the course of civilization is a race between catastrophe and education. In a democracy such as ours, we must make sure that education wins the race.***

*-John F. Kennedy (1958)*

Though its roots as a discipline are ancient, the study of geography is more relevant and important today than ever before. Young people today interact with places around the world on a daily basis--whether directly or indirectly--and advancements in technologies have made geography a dynamic and stimulating field of study. An understanding of places and the fundamental concepts of geography are essential if our students are to become well-rounded, well-informed global thinkers.

According to the Geography Education Standards Project (GESP), geography is the science of space and place on Earth's surface; students in geography classes seek to understand both the physical and cultural features of our increasingly complex world. National leaders understood the importance of having geographically aware students and, therefore, included geography as a core subject in Goals 2000: Educate America Act (Public Law 103-227).

Geography is more than simply learning place names and locations. It includes learning why places are located where they are and how culture, religion, politics, economics, and environments affect and explain past, current, and future connections and conflicts.

The Geography Essential Standards for Poudre School District were developed by K-10 teachers using the Colorado Model Content Standards and research from Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL). The purpose of the geography standards is to set clear guidelines for what students should know and be able to do to become "geographically informed citizens" (GESP, 1994). The Geography Essential Standards are to be used by teachers to guide what is taught in the classroom, to serve as a baseline for assessment for all students at a given grade level, and to focus staff development. The standards will enable parents to be aware of what students will be taught and for what they are responsible. The existing geography standards for PSD have been updated to reflect current state and national trends and to better anticipate future student needs. The Geography Essential Standards should be viewed as a dynamic, living document that is to be examined and updated regularly.

In grades K-2, each of the Geography Essential Standards is introduced. In grades 3, 7, and 10, similar concepts are presented at each grade, but the level of mastery (i.e. as in Bloom's taxonomy) will become increasingly complex. For example, while we ask students in all grades "to know how to use maps, globes and other geographic tools to acquire, process and report information from a spatial perspective", third graders would be expected to know how to use an atlas, while tenth graders would be expected to analyze spatial information and data.

Good geography, as one of the cornerstones of social studies, ensures that our students will move through PSD to become productive and compassionate citizens in our community and our global society. It is our obligation to educate every child, every day, about the world in which they live and will lead.