

EDUCATION PARTNERSHIPS EVENT REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Attendee and Report Writer's Name:
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Event: National Council for the Social Studies – Rocky Mountains/Great Plains Regional Conference

Location: Denver, Colorado

Event Date(s): 13-16 April 2005

The response below from a teacher who attended a workshop that we conducted at this event illustrates why we do what we do:

Joseph –

First of all, thank you for all of the valuable information and resources you provided on Saturday. I was at the double session on GPS. Your session was not only one of the best of the conference but would have made the conference worth the registration cost by itself.

I wanted to follow-up to get the contact information on the organization that loans GPS units.

Thanks again for your time last week.

Founded in 1921, the National Council for the Social Studies has grown to be the largest association in the country devoted solely to social studies education. NCSS engages and supports educators in strengthening and advocating social studies. With members in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and 69 foreign countries, NCSS serves as an umbrella organization for elementary, secondary, and college teachers of history,

geography, economics, political science, sociology, civics, psychology, anthropology, and law-related education. Organized into a network of more than 110 affiliated state, local, and regional councils and associated groups, the NCSS membership represents K-12 classroom teachers, college and university faculty members, curriculum designers and specialists, social studies supervisors, and leaders in the various disciplines that constitute the social studies. The Rocky Mountain/Great Plains chapter is comprised of members from approximately 10 states.



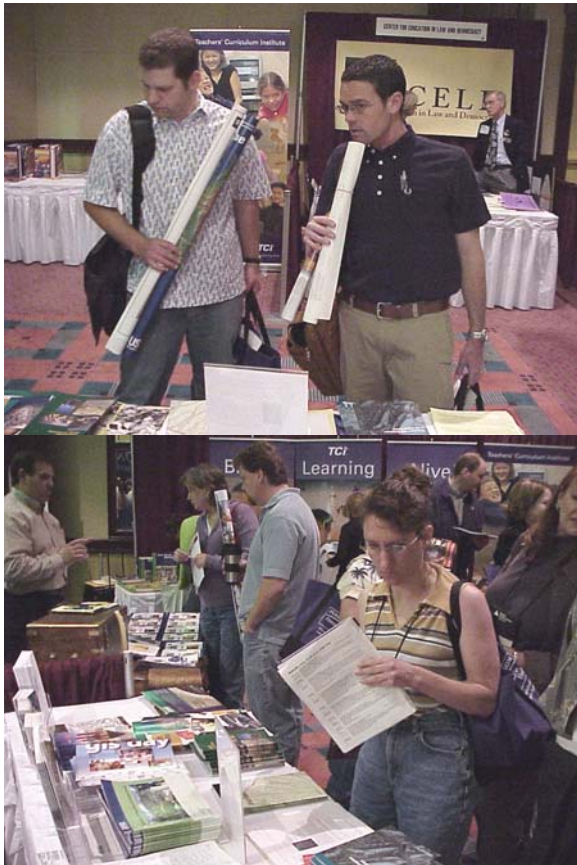
Joseph Kerski at the USGS information exhibit at the NCSS Regional Conference.

This social studies conference allowed us to connect with teachers who might not be familiar with us, namely, history and economics educators. In addition, it was important that we were there because geography, one of our strengths, is embedded in the social studies in K-12 in the USA. In addition, physical geography, one of our main emphases, is written into some state and the national geography standards. Many teachers are not completely familiar with this aspect of geography and appreciated our presence at the conference. Approximately 480 educators attended the conference.

I taught 2 workshops on how to use GPS and topographic maps in the curriculum. GPS and GIS are powerful tools to record field

data and explore patterns of demography, commerce, and physical phenomena.

I operated a USGS information exhibit on the 2nd floor of the Hyatt Hotel in the Denver Tech Center. The traffic was lighter than expected but overall it was a good way to connect with teachers from several disciplines across Colorado and other states. I featured the 1894 map of Colorado, a Colorado shaded relief map from the NED data, and the Presidential Elections Map on the display backdrop. I distributed geography education lessons, posters, and booklets, as well as overstocked maps.



Educators at our USGS exhibit.



The exhibitors were varied and quite fascinating, including map and globe private industry, textbook publishers, nonprofit organizations, and others. These exhibitors clearly demonstrated that are many wonderful resources available to teach social studies today.

Recommendations

1) We might want to pursue an educational partnership with the NCSS, and possibly host an exhibit at the national NCSS conference, which is held each November, to reach more educators. NCSS attracts over 10,000 teachers to the national convention, and they also hold an international conference.

2) We should continue to pursue outside funding for outreach events. Universities, private companies, and professional societies may fund us to conduct an off-site event.

3) These are exciting times for geography education, with the resurgence of public interest in the subject, AP Geography, and national K-12 standards in geography. Education receives a great deal of publicity. The USGS should continue to pursue educational venues with both an exhibit and a presentation.

4) GPS and GIS are being increasingly used in secondary and even primary schools. The USGS should continue to investigate the educational potential of GPS and GIS so that we can make informed answers to customers who seek to use our data in a GIS.

5) I attended an excellent workshop by Shawna Crocker and Catherine Estes from Project Learning Tree entitled “Exploring Environmental Issues in the Places We Live.” PLT’s goals overlap with many of our own – to provide authentic learning experiences and materials, including environmental and landscape change themes. I recommend we pursue an educational partnership with PLT.



Above, working with topographic maps before heading into the field with GPS.



The GPS portion of our workshop included discussion about datums and coordinate systems and ways to use GPS in education.



National Council for the Social Studies President Jesus García, Professor of Social Studies Education at UNLV, gives the keynote address entitled “Social Studies on Auto Pilot.”



We used tracks, waypoints, and coordinate systems with GPS with the attendees.



Above, Lincoln Land Institute with their excellent materials to teach about growth and change in communities. In my opinion, this is exactly the kind of geography teaching we need more of in the schools—using real data and relevant issues in an analytical, not a memorization, mode.



Above, NCSS attendees gather to hear Professor Garcia's keynote address.

Acknowledgements

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*** End of NCSS Regional Report ***