

GIS at Young Age

The Coppel Independent School District (CISD) in Coppel, Texas, USA, recently implemented a three-year Esri site license that will allow all its primary and secondary school students to learn geographic information system (GIS) software. Initially, ArcGIS will be introduced in a variety of subjects in the district's middle and high school classrooms.

Dr. Jeffrey Turner, superintendent of CISD, was introduced to the benefits of learning GIS in a K-12 education seminar at Esri headquarters in Redlands, California. "GIS software is one of the most exciting tools that I have seen in a long time," says Turner. "It puts the world in the hands of our learners and engages them in a way that captures their imagination and enhances their creative spirit."

CISD contacted Dallas-based GISetc, an Esri education partner, which conducted a district-wide presentation for principals and administrators about GIS and how it could be integrated into existing classroom instruction. In addition, the company held a professional development seminar for high school and middle school teachers.

Concludes Anita Palmer, co-owner of GISetc, "The US Department of Labor has identified GIS as one of the high-growth technologies and industries. Providing secondary school students with the opportunity to learn its capabilities exposes them to the educational and career opportunities available in many fields. Students using GIS build and expand their skills around data use and interpretation with a geographic eye. They grow and mature highly effective critical-thinking skills when given the opportunity to learn GIS."

Among future plans, the district has indicated an interest in investigating GIS for administrative functions. However, it has made a tactical decision to implement it first in the classroom based on Superintendent Turner's view that all the 10,000 students in the district should have the opportunity to learn geospatial technologies.

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