West Virginia Expands STEM Education

The adoption of ESRI's geographic information system (GIS) software statewide marks the next step for West Virginia in doing its part in the national effort to expand science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education.

According to Charlie Fitzpatrick, K-12 education manager at ESRI, "More and more states see value in GIS for all students, in all grades and subject areas, because it fosters integrative thinking, analysis, problem solving, and communication. These are critical skills students must master not only to make the most of social studies and STEM education but also to become effective workers and informed citizens."

During the past few years, West Virginia's Department of Education has conducted GIS seminars for its teachers at its Social Studies Summer Institute and annual Teacher Leadership Institute. In addition, the West Virginia Geographic Alliance regularly offers seminars and classes in ArcGIS software.

"We are excited about the prospect of providing GIS instruction throughout our elementary and secondary schools," says Regina Scotchie, social studies coordinator for the West Virginia Department of Education. "We are focusing our attention on grades 6 through 12; however, we have not limited the use of GIS to any particular grade level."