

*Powerful Geography Project*

# Powerful Geography: The Way Forward



**Subject and Grade Level:**

High School World Geography Studies/ AP Human Geography

**Overview for Teachers:**

We have been teaching geography in Texas schools pretty much the same way for almost three decades, with a continued dependence on “top-down” curriculum guides that assume that all students need to learn the same content and skills. The National Assessment of Educational Progress in Geography has demonstrated that this approach is vacant and unable to offer growth and change in geography learning. There has been no statistically significant change in geography learning over 24 years and, in fact, a decline among Black and Hispanic students. It is time for change, and it is the responsibility of Texas teachers to bring that change about.

Powerful Geography is a new way for students in K-12 Texas schools to learn geography. It is a “bottom-up” curriculum framework that begins with the notion that school kids are very different from each other and that they have a wide variety of learning styles and aspirations for college, careers, and civic life. Powerful Geography is a way forward. It is what Wesley Null refers to as a “liberating curriculum”.

This teaching unit uses Powerful Geography to help students apply their geography learning to real-world situations, jobs, and careers, a way to link school learning to actual situations that will offer a bright future to today’s student.

**Overview for Students:**

Many of you have truly enjoyed your geography course this year, but you are wondering “What’s next?” Can I take other high school geography courses? What about college? And, further, what would I do to prepare myself for a job or career where I use my geography knowledge and skills daily.

This learning unit, “Powerful Geography: The Way Forward” is designed to broaden your knowledge of the broad applicability of geography programs at most universities and there is an abundance of real world information about jobs/careers that require geographic understanding. Visit [powerfulgeography.org](http://powerfulgeography.org) and look at the column “Student Resources”. There you will find almost 150 descriptions of jobs in which geography knowledge and skills play a big part. You might also enjoy watching some of the interviews in which real people discuss how geography has led them to meaningful employment and a fulfilling career.

**Overview for Teachers and Students:**

As you work your way through the teaching and learning unit *Powerful Geography: The Way Forward*, take advantage of the rich Grosvenor Center/National Center website ([powerfulgeography.org](http://powerfulgeography.org)) in which resides a variety of resources designed to explain Powerful Geography and its role in preparing modern students for college, careers, and a meaningful life.

July 2020.

Developed by Joshua Williams, Jessica Pittman, Kivett Gresham, Joe Ostrowski, & Charlie Perryman

**TEKS:**

WG.7.A, WG.8.B, WG.11.B, WG.12.A-B, WG.15.A, WG.16.A, WG.19.A-C, WG.20.A-B, WG.23.A-C

**Materials:**

- [Powerful Geography Job Summaries](#)
- [Texas State Geography Alumni Business Cards](#)

**Unit Objectives:**

For Teachers:

1. Introduce students to the concept of Powerful Geography
2. Guide students into the Powerful Geography website ([powerfulgeography.org](http://powerfulgeography.org))
3. Consider diverse characteristics of students and how this might affect how Powerful Geography is used to identify pathways in college and career decisions.

For Students:

1. Discuss guiding principles of geography, e.g. thinking geographically, population and migration, cultural differences, political patterns, agriculture and rural land-use patterns, urban regions and geographic characteristics, and industrial and economic development.
2. Participate in a class discussion of geographic elements of your neighborhood, town, or region.
3. Use the Powerful Geography website ([powerfulgeography.org](http://powerfulgeography.org)) to help suggest local or regional job opportunities.

**Differentiation strategies to meet diverse learner needs:**

Students will research different career options in geographic related fields and choose a specific career based on diverse and individual interests.

**Engagement:**

Students reflect...

- Each student is asked to talk about some interesting aspect of geography from this year's course. What concepts were most interesting? (E.g. population and migration, culture, agriculture, services/industries/ globalization, political geography, economic development, health services, skills such as GIS/Remote Sensing).
- Can you see any connection to jobs or careers?

**Exploration:**

Students explore ...

- Students explore the "Student Resources" section on the Powerful Geography website ([powerfulgeography.org](http://powerfulgeography.org)) to see if this material sparks an interest in a particular job/career.
- *Teacher's Note:* Remind students that this resource is the connection of geography teaching and learning to the real world.

**Explanation:**

Students explain ...

- A class discussion follows on useful geographic skills learned from this course and how these skills might be further obtained in college and required in the workplace.

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**Elaboration:**

Students expand ...

- Which interview was the most interesting? Why?
- What skills/experience are required for this job? (i.e. education, courses, major)
- How is geography used within this job?
- Where would you likely find a job like this?
- What college classes would be helpful?
- What special training would you need if you wanted to pursue this type of career?  
(*Teacher's Note:* Use a military career as an example)
- In what ways would you be able to improve society/the world in this job/career area?
- How might this career impact you?

**Evaluation:**

Students demonstrate ...

- Students will produce a product that specifically identifies a professional career that is geography related and holds personal interest for that individual.
- Suggested products can be a video presentation such as a FlipGrid, a digital report via Google Docs, or a hard copy. The student product needs to identify the career, specific skills and educational requirements, a salary range for entry, related fields and why they are interested in the specific career.

**Extension:**

Student led career fair

**Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS):**

World Geography Studies:

- **WG.7. Geography. The student understands the growth, distribution, movement, and characteristics of world population. The student is expected to:**
  - A. Analyze population pyramids and use other data, graphics, and maps to describe the population characteristics of different societies and to predict future population trends.
- **WG.8. Geography. The student understands how people, places, and environments are connected and interdependent. The student is expected to:**
  - B. Analyze the consequences of extreme weather and other natural disasters such as El Nino, floods, tsunamis, and volcanoes on people and their environment.
- **WG.11. Economics. The student understands how geography influences economic activities. The student is expected to:**
  - B. Identify the factors affecting the location of different types of economic activities, including subsistence and commercial agriculture, manufacturing, and service industries.
- **WG.12. Economics. The student understands the economic importance of, and issues related to, the location and management of resources. The student is expected to:**

- A. Analyze how the creation, distribution, and management of key natural resources affects the location and patterns of movement of products, money, and people.
  - B. Evaluate the geographic and economic impact of policies related to the development, use, and scarcity of natural resources such as regulations of water.
- **WG.15. Citizenship. The student understands how different points of view influence the development of public policies and decision-making processes at national and international levels. The student is expected to:**
  - A. Identify and give examples of different points of view that influence the development of public policies and decision-making processes at national and international levels.
- **WG.16. Culture. The student understands how the components of culture affect the way people live and shape the characteristics of regions. The student is expected to:**
  - A. Describe distinctive cultural patterns and landscapes associated with different places in Texas, the United States, and other regions of the world and how these patterns influenced the processes of innovation and diffusion.
- **WG.19. Science, technology, and society. The student understands the impact of technology and human modifications on the physical environment. The student is expected to:**
  - A. Evaluate the significance of major technological innovations in the areas of transportation and energy that have been used to modify the physical environment.
  - B. Analyze ways technological innovations such as air conditioning and desalinization have allowed humans to adapt to places.
  - C. Analyze the environmental, economic, and social impacts of advances in technology on agriculture and natural resources.
- **WG.20. Science, technology, and society. The student understands how current technology affects human interaction. The student is expected to:**
  - A. Describe the impact of new information technologies such as the Internet, Global Positioning System (GPS), or Geographic Information Systems (GIS).
  - B. Examine the economic, environmental, and social effects of technology such as medical advancements or changing trade patterns on societies at different levels of development.
- **WG.23. Social studies skills. The student uses problem-solving and decision-making skills, working independently and with others. The student is expected to:**

- A.** Plan, organize, and complete a research project that involves asking geographic questions; acquiring, organizing, and analyzing information; answering questions; and communicating results.
- B.** Use case studies and GIS to identify contemporary challenges and to answer real-world questions
- C.** Use problem-solving and decision-making processes to identify a problem, gather information, list and consider options, consider advantages and disadvantages, choose and implement a solution, and evaluate the effectiveness of the solution.