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New space for geography in K-12 Computer Science curriculum

Paper Abstract

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Abstract

In the U.S., the geography course subject is typically incorporated in social studies classes. Yet, geography has slowly lost its prominence in the U.S. over the years. Social studies teachers reported spending only 10% of their time teaching geography. History, civics/government, and economics are often prioritized (GAO, 2014). As of 2021, there are only three states (Minnesota, New Hampshire, and Utah) that require a standalone geography course for high school graduation (Zadrozny, 2021). The declining prominence of geography in the U.S. curriculum is clearly reflected in student outcomes (see Solem, 2023; GAO, 2014). If we want to better prepare the next generation, we can work to ensure the geography curriculum finds its place. This could mean ensuring sufficient space for geography in social studies, but it would also be relevant for geography to find space in the new computer science curriculum. An assessment about the rollout of the new CS curriculum reveals persisting disparities in terms of access and participation (Code.org, CSTA, & ECEP Alliance, 2020). Exposing students to both geography and computer science may have benefits in terms of broadening participation. The Geospatial Semester, for example, helps K-12 students master geospatial technologies and the authors describe spatial thinking skills as a gateway to STEM careers. Their curiculum has shown that their use of geographic information systems augments student problem solving, particularly for females (Kolvoord, 2021). Therefore, we should test more integration of course subjects (e.g., geography in computer science curriculum, and vice versa).

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