

Talking about the Future of GIS Education

It all began with a conversation.

Rather than listening to a series of presentations on Esri's plans, attendees to the 12th annual Education GIS Conference engaged in a 90-minute facilitated community conversation with Esri education managers and community spokespersons during the first meeting of a new GIS Education Community Advisory Board on July 23, 2012.

The advisory board, made up of education leaders and other professionals, is charged with helping ensure that Esri's education industry solutions team (education team) aligns its strategic priorities with GIS education community needs.

"We made a concerted effort to engage the community at this year's conference to help formulate the direction of GIS education for the next 20 years," said David DiBiase, Esri director of education for industry solutions.

The discussion during the meeting revolved around four questions:

1. With regard to educational resources, what is the GIS education community? What is the Esri education team's relationship to it?
2. Does the ArcLessons collection address community needs effectively? In light of trends in the GIS education community, what should ArcLessons become?
3. What should Esri's priorities be for educational resource development in 2013?
4. What should Esri's education team do to advance research-based knowledge about the efficacy of GIS in education?

"Attendees were encouraged to join the conversation with respected thought leaders," said DiBiase. "I believe that it was a useful way to better understand the challenges and opportunities we face at the cusp of a new generation of GIS education." Conversation topics included education and the cloud; open educational resources; careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM); educational policy; campus facilities; and global initiatives.



↑ Attendees at the 12th annual Education GIS Conference engaged in a facilitated conversation with thought leaders in GIS education about the challenges and opportunities specific to GIS education.

Diana Sinton, director of spatial curriculum and research at the University of Redlands, is an inaugural member of the GIS Education Community Advisory Board. "I think it was a very forward-thinking idea for Esri to organize this group," said Sinton. "They have done a very good job in selecting people from a variety of backgrounds in both academics and the professional world that will help shape and inform the range of activities that the Esri education team is responsible for. One of the team's problems is that it is a relatively small group, but it is responsible for a breadth of educational programs and activities. My area is in applied spatial thinking. I think that geospatial technologies have the potential to be a very effective tool to support applied spatial thinking, and I will be sharing this knowledge with the advisory board."

Based on feedback from the advisory board, the education team will review Esri educational resource development and dissemination to make sure that educational materials are relevant to the needs of users.

2012 GIS Education Community Advisory Board

Amy Ballard Central New Mexico Community College, New Mexico

Sarah Bednarz Texas A&M University, Texas

Margaret Chernosky Bangor High School, Maine

Sara Damon Stillwater Junior High School, Minnesota

Adam Dastrup Salt Lake Community College, Utah

Eva Dodsworth University of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada

Kenneth Field Esri, California

Iain Greensmith Esri Canada Limited, Ontario, Canada

Keene Haywood University of Texas, Austin, Texas

Khusro Kidwai Pennsylvania State University, Pennsylvania

Erika Klose Winfield Middle School, West Virginia

Bob Kolvoord James Madison University, Virginia

Mark Lindberg University of Minnesota, Minnesota

Anita Palmer GISetc, Texas

Lori Ann Rubino-Hare Northern Arizona University, Arizona

Adena Schutzberg ABS Consulting and Directions Media, Massachusetts

Diana Stuart Sinton University of Redlands, California

Debbie Stevens William Penn University, Iowa