

NCGE-GeoCamp Iceland: Transforming Professional Development in Geography Education

Rationale

Building on serendipitous collaboration with *GeoCamp Iceland*, the National Council for Geographic Education (NCGE) developed a two-week field study of the Reykjanes Peninsula and southern Iceland for K-12 teachers in 2015. In 2017, NCGE-GeoCamp Iceland again invited K-12 teachers to participate, but also solicited applications from informal and community educators as well as postsecondary faculty in geography and the geosciences.



Field Course Objectives

The NCGE-GeoCamp Iceland field course used inquiry-based education and the geographic inquiry model to help participants:

- ☐ Explain the “geographic advantage” (Hanson 2004)
 - relationships between people and the environment,
 - the importance of spatial variability (the place-dependence of processes),
 - processes operating at multiple and interlocking geographic scales, and
 - the integration of spatial and temporal analysis.
- ☐ Ask and answer geographic questions (Downs & Heffron 2012; NCSS 2013)
- ☐ Explicitly connect course curriculum to geography content, perspectives and skills (Roberts 2013)
- ☐ Design inquiry-based geographic fieldwork and/or classroom activities for students modeled on the experiences in Iceland (NCSS 2013; Roberts 2013)



Modeling Inquiry-based Instruction

The NCGE-GeoCamp Iceland field course placed teachers in environments where team leaders encouraged participants to ask *compelling questions*, such as

- What is a good location for a geothermal power plant?
- How can society exist amid so much destructive power?
- Is Iceland a safe place to live?
- How can energy build or bust a place?

Such in-field experiences were closely followed by mini-lessons and/or presentations by experts from both public and private sector stakeholders in Iceland. Furthermore, the field course emphasized the fundamental tenet: “that the physical and human worlds are intricately connected: One cannot be fully grasped without the other...” (Lambert, Solem, & Tani 2015, p733).



2017 NCGE-GeoCamp Iceland

Participants

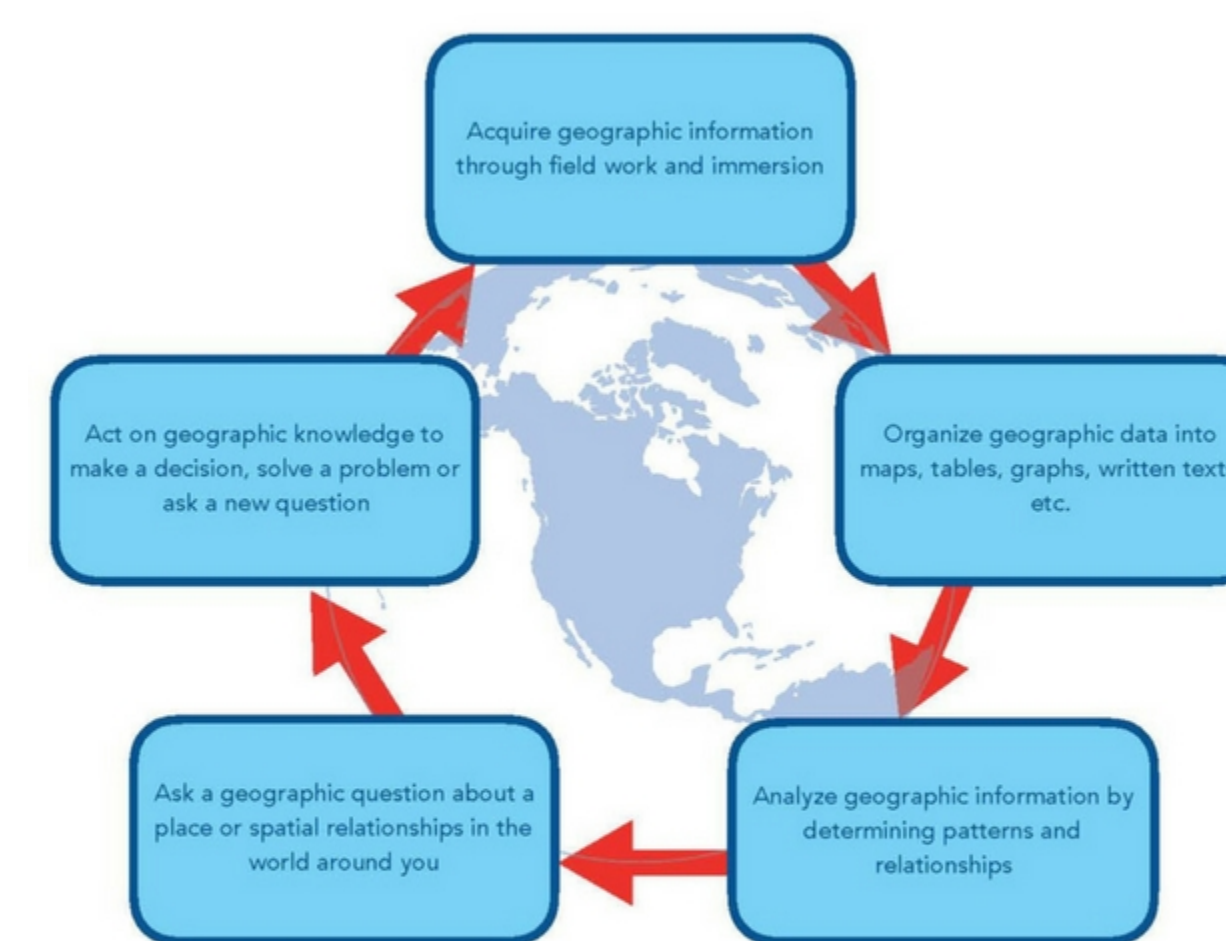
Thomas Allen NE	Judith Bock IL	Carly Borken CT
Dean Butzow IL	Mark Carpenter NY	Frances Coffee VA
Tara Cohen GA	Rebecca Dodge TX	Erik Hodges IL
Tracy Law OH	Matt Lutinski MA	Jeremia Njeru IA
Jessica Parra DC	Spring Petta WA	Janel Pidgeon VA
Sara Rabas WI	Amanda Ringling SD	Catherine Roberts VA
Carol Sawyer AL	Steven White MS	Patricia Valenteen CA

NCGE Leaders

Robert Morrill VA	Ellen J. Foster MS	Robert Dulli MD
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GeoCamp Iceland Leaders

Arnbjörn Olafsson	Puríður Halldóra Aradóttir Braun
Ólafur Jón Arnbjörnsson	Sossá Björnsdóttir



Source: *Geography for Life: National Geography Standards*, 7th-8th, p. 95-100



Professional Development & Field Studies

The field guide developed by Morrill, Waite, and Dulli (2015/2017) and materials curated for in the Cloud-based storage service Dropbox provided participants with current events and research on Iceland as well as strategies for teaching powerful geography in their classrooms (Schell, Roth, & Mohan 2013; Lambert, Solem, & Tani 2015).

Field guide activities which could be easily adaptable to the K-12 or postsecondary classroom included:

- ☐ A sense of place inventory
- ☐ A layers of inference activity (Roberts 2013)
- ☐ A landscape analysis based on Meinig’s (1979) “Ten Versions of the Same Scene”
- ☐ An natural hazard & mitigation inventory and energy & economic activity analysis using spheres of influence to track connections and relationships.

Additionally, participants from both 2015 and 2017 were invited to join a “closed” Facebook group to facilitate team building and networking before and after the field course. The Facebook group space continues to serve as a sounding board for lesson ideas and discussion of events relevant to the classroom.



Program Evaluation & Assessment

The program evaluation included daily “two-minute” reflections reviewed by the team leaders while in the field so program adjustments could be made as interests or needs dictated. After the field course, team leaders invited the participants to complete a Google Form which will guide future programming.

Several participants commented that they saw new connections between the Advanced Placement Human Geography and Environmental Science courses. Two important findings were: the need for participants to have the field guide before travel and an expert in regional geology/geomorphology available after select field site visits.

Future Projects & Plans

The following are just a few of the projects in development at this time:

- ☐ A special issue of *The Geography Teacher* by NCGE-GeoCamp Iceland participants
- ☐ A session on NCGE professional development field courses – Iceland and Cuba - at the 2018 AAG annual meeting, sponsored by the National Center for Research in Geographic Education
- ☐ 2018 GeoCamp Iceland for pre-service teachers through the University of Mississippi School of Education and StudyAbroad
- ☐ A set of story maps and lessons for K-12 teachers which are linked to the *C3 Framework for State Social Studies Standards* (NCSS 2013), and
- ☐ A comparative study of teacher preparation, professional development, and mentoring between Iceland and Mississippi.

