

Minnesota Alliance for Geographic Education Strategic Plan



Mission Statement

The Minnesota Alliance for Geographic Education (MAGE), a member of National Geographic Society Education Foundation (NGSEF) Geographic Alliance Network, is a collaborative group of educators who advocate geographic literacy for all teachers and students. Our mission is to provide curricular resources, educational experiences, and professional networking opportunities that motivate and inspire teachers to benefit students.

Core Values

MAGE is an organization that values and provides networking opportunities where members develop a sense of community. This professional organization provides opportunities for members to collaborate and celebrate with other members to become leaders in the development of geographic education in Minnesota.

Vision Statement

Since 1987, the Minnesota Department of Education and MAGE have made many adjustments to improve the quality and consistency of K-12 geographic education. In 2012, the state legislature mandated grade-level specific standards in geography. To improve on this foundation, MAGE's vision is to have all Minnesota districts implement curriculum that will enable their students to master the grade-level specific Minnesota State graduation requirements for geography; thereby becoming geographic literate by the year 2025. Students will demonstrate geo-literacy through the use of geospatial technologies, geographic materials, and geographic based data. This information will be used to analyze and evaluate a range of geographic issues at local to global scales.

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Six Strategic Goals for MAGE

ONE

All school districts offer opportunities/courses necessary for their students to achieve mastery of the K – 12 Minnesota Standards for Geography.

TWO

Strengthen standards based geographic instruction through professional development opportunities offered by MAGE.

THREE

Create, provide, and evaluate assessments in order to measure student progress toward MAGE's established geographic literacy goal.

FOUR

Create, provide, and evaluate curriculum that supports the teaching of geography.

FIVE

Continue to support, develop, and evaluate programs that promote geographic education and awareness beyond the classroom.

SIX

Recruit new members and encourage present members to take on new roles.

GOAL ONE

All school districts offer opportunities/courses necessary for their students to achieve mastery of the K – 12 Minnesota Standards for Geography.

Objectives

- A. Cooperate with the Center for Social Studies Education's efforts to provide information to important decision makers (e.g., superintendents, curriculum directors and legislators) each year, via electronic or print, about the importance implementing the new geography standards.
- B. Participate in the ongoing efforts of the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) and the Center for Social Studies Education (CSSE) to present information and/or methods to implement the Minnesota State Geography Standards to school districts in Minnesota.
- C. Provide consultation service to districts to help them implement courses and implement instruction that will meet the state geography standards.
- D. Meet with teachers and district leaders to strengthen the instruction of geographic concepts at the elementary and middle schools.
- E. Annually evaluate the effectiveness of this work. This will be accomplished by reporting to the Steering Committee the number of decision makers who were contacted, the method of contact and by whom. The report will also include information about which conferences and attendees received presentations and MAGE members who conducted these presentations. The report will include how MAGE worked with MDE and CSSE.

GOAL TWO

Strengthen standards based geographic instruction through professional development opportunities offered by MAGE.

Objectives

- A. Maintain the professional development opportunities, which are listed below in five groups based on priority, to individuals who teach geographic concepts. Annually determine which of the five groups will be supported.
 - Priority Group 1 – Host a minimum of one conference for geography teachers per year, e.g., GEOFEST.
 - Priority Group 2 – Offer a minimum of a one week MAGE Summer Institute each year.
 - Priority Group 3 – Collaborate with other organizations in offering workshops that will enhance geographic education each year.
 - Priority Group 4 – Offer professional support to pre-service teacher university programs each year.
- B. Expand professional development opportunities in learning technologies (e.g., GIS High School Training) at the University of Minnesota for teachers of geography and other teachers, as appropriate.
- C. Annually evaluate the effectiveness of these programs. This will be accomplished by having the Steering Committee determine which professional development opportunities to maintain based on the number of people affected in the previous year, by measuring the effectiveness of the programs as determined by survey results received from participants and by funding.

GOAL THREE

Create, provide, and evaluate assessments in order to measure student progress toward MAGE's established geographic literacy goal.

Objectives

- A. Provide high school summative assessments for each Minnesota State Standard and/or unit of study. Assessments will be made available to educators via a password protected website through the University of Minnesota's Learning Technologies Media Lab (LTML). Participants will be asked to complete a survey on the effectiveness of assessments on a bi-annual basis.
- B. Develop, implement, and evaluate middle school standard based summative assessments and or a question bank for each Minnesota State Standard by 2015. Assessments will be made available to educators via a password protected website through the University of Minnesota's LTML. Participants will be asked to complete a survey on the effectiveness of assessments on a bi-annual basis.
- C. Annually evaluate the effectiveness of these assessments by analyzing the survey results and making changes prior to the beginning of the next school year.

GOAL FOUR

Create, provide, and evaluate curriculum that supports the teaching of geography.

Objectives

- A. Development of curriculum may be done by members of the MAGE Summer Institute to be shared on MAGE's website and/or through a variety of professional development activities.
- B. Annually collaborate with other professional organizations to develop geographic lessons and/or curriculum.
- C. Annually create, gather, consolidate, organize, and convert geographic resources to digital format in order to supplement curriculum.
- D. Provide consultants to Minnesota school districts and/or regions to work with teachers on K - 12 geographic curriculum developments [when requested].
- E. Annually create and/or revise middle school projects and/or activities to support the Minnesota Geography Standards.
- F. Annually evaluate the effectiveness of MAGE developed curriculum by analyzing survey results from those who used the various curriculum sources and making changes prior to the beginning of the next school year.

GOAL FIVE

Continue to support, develop, and evaluate programs that promote geographic education and awareness beyond the classroom.

Objectives

- A. Create a K - 12 Geography Awareness Task Force that will investigate outreach awareness opportunities to offer each year (e.g., Geography Fair, Public Awareness Committee and Geography Awareness Week). The task force will meet annually and inform the MAGE Steering Committee of all outreach opportunities.
- B. Annually evaluate the effectiveness of each program supported and developed by analyzing data collected by coordinators of the events that indicate the number of participants and by analyzing survey results.

GOAL SIX

Recruit new members and encourage present members to take on new roles.

Objectives

- A. In 2012 - 2013 begin a membership invitation program where existing MAGE Steering Committee members will be e-mailed an invitation to remain on the Steering Committee. These invitations will include expectations for Steering Committee members (e.g., attend meetings, join a committee, participate and/or volunteer at various events and take on leadership roles).
- B. In 2012 - 2013 begin a membership invitation program where attendees at GEOFEST, the Summer Institute(s) and the Geography Fair will be given a written invitation to join the Steering Committee. These invitations will include expectations for Steering Committee members (e.g., attend meetings, join a committee, participate and/or volunteer at various events and take on leadership roles).
- C. Create regional outreach liaisons whose responsibility will be to create, develop and implement workshops/geographic learning opportunity in their region of Minnesota.
- D. Increase the number of teachers in the MAGE network.
- E. Annually evaluate the effectiveness of these programs. The membership taskforce will report to the Steering Committee the number of people actively involved in MAGE and the types of workshops/learning opportunities offered outside of the Twin Cities area. The membership task force will also report on the number of new members who have joined the Steering Committee.
- F. In cooperation with NGS, MAGE will implement the Leadership Change Plan and create an Administration Committee to assist the co-coordinators in the administration and governing of MAGE, in addition to disseminating information to the members of the committees and members of the Steering

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Committee when necessary. Members of the Executive Committee would include but not limited to, the co-coordinators and chairs of the following committees*:

Administration
Professional Development
Standards Implementation
Membership/Social
Technology
Public Outreach

- G. The Steering Committee of MAGE will remain in its current structure with membership being open to those who are willing to volunteer at events, attend meetings, join committees and take on leadership roles.
- H. Evaluate the effectiveness of this plan and the organizational administration of MAGE on an annual basis. This will be done once all of the other Strategic Goal evaluations have been collected and analyzed. Analysis of these evaluations will inform the Executive Committee what programs are working well, which ones need minor changes, which ones need major changes, and which ones, if any, need to be revised or eliminated.

Committee Descriptions

Administration Committee

Oversees fundraising and government relations, provides budget management, and monitors the implementation of the strategic plan.

Professional Development Committee

Assist social studies and geography teachers in Minnesota improve their understanding of geography and pedagogy -- "Help teachers become the best teachers they can be" and thereby increased their ability to effectively teach the Minnesota Standards.

Action/Implementation Subcommittees:

- Summer Institutes
- GEOFEST Minnesota
- Other (one time offerings)

Standards Implementation Committee

Assist school districts in Minnesota implement the standards by providing consulting services that will help organize and develop curriculum and assessment. This will help to insure the standards are being implemented in ways that will enable students to master the Minnesota standards and achieve expected levels of geographic literacy. The committee will be organized into three subcommittees that reflect the K-12.

Subcommittees:

- 1) High School
- 2) Middle School
- 3) Elementary Teams

Membership Committee - Create and implement methods to increase the general membership help recruit participants for MAGE's Summer Institute, GEOFEST, Geography Fair, etc. Organize social activities for MAGE members. This committee will be putting the fun into MAGE.

Technology Committee - Develop new applications of instructional technology and social media tools to create opportunities for collaboration among MAGE members.

Public Outreach Committee - Create and implement events, such as the Geography Fair, Geography Day at the Zoo and Geography Awareness Week, which will bring attention to the world of geography inside and outside the classroom.

Many committees will need to have sub-committees from time to time. It will be the role of the committee chair to determine and find sub-committee chairs. Committees will be added and/or removed as necessary.

Mandates from Primary Stakeholders

MAGE has mandates emanating from four primary institutional affiliations. They are Macalester College, the National Geographic Society Education Foundation (NGSEF), the Minnesota Office of Higher Education (MOHE) and the Associated Colleges of the Twin Cities (ACTC).

Macalester College. As the fiduciary agent and physical home for MAGE, Macalester College's administrative procedures govern many of MAGE's operations. The primary mandates govern the budget process. Macalester's accounting and payment procedures must be followed. All grant proposals must be edited and approved by the Advancement Department. All uses of space for offices and meetings must be allocated by the college space allocation process and the procedures set in place for using college spaces for meetings and GEOFEST. Macalester also grants graduate credit to participants in the summer institute. Therefore the college's academic standards and class time requirements must be enforced.

National Geographic Society Education Foundation. As holder of the Fund for the Minnesota Alliance for Geographic Education, the NGSEF grant application procedures govern the processes through which MAGE requests the annual payout on our endowment. The procedures vary but always include a requirement for fiduciary responsibility, evaluation and programming elements that are aligned with the goals of the NGSEF.

Minnesota Office of Higher Education. The MOHE provides annual grants to MAGE for the summer geography institutes. Its grant application procedures govern processes through which MAGE requests the annual grant. The procedures vary but always include a requirement for fiduciary responsibility and the creation of professional development programs for teachers that are based on research and have a positive impact on the education of students in high need school districts. The guidelines also require the implementation of an approved evaluation plan. One critical component of this mandate is the program must involve an academic geography department, a college or university department of education and a high need school district. The number of children from families with incomes below the poverty line in a district determines its designation as a high need school district.

Associated Colleges of the Twin Cities. The ACTC provides an annual grant to MAGE to defray some of the costs of GEOFEST. This is done to support the attendance by ACTC students in the conference. No specific mandate for minimum levels of participation by ACTC students was established by ACTC, but we expect that a minimum attendance by ACTC students will be established during the next budget cycle or the ACTC may withdraw its support altogether.

Stakeholders that do not provide financial support for MAGE
The primary stakeholders are the students enrolled in K-12 classrooms across the state. There are no direct connections

among all the stakeholders and MAGE. Furthermore, there are no direct lines of communication between MAGE and the students.

K-12 geography teachers are another primary set of stakeholders that have informal linkages with MAGE. These teachers are both the clients and members of MAGE. They have a diverse set of needs and expectations of MAGE.

Currently, MAGE has three institutional partners: the Science Museum of Minnesota (SMM), the Minnesota Zoo, and Minnesota Agriculture in the Classroom. These partnerships are limited to specific programs. The SMM and MAGE host the annual Geographers' Fair for students in grades 4-8. The Minnesota Zoo and MAGE collaborate in programming for the annual Geography Day at the Zoo. Minnesota Agriculture in the Classroom and MAGE has cooperated in the creation and publication of *Food For Thought*, a set of lessons focused on the geography of agriculture in Minnesota. This material is created once every five years following the US Department of Agriculture Census of Agriculture.

The Minnesota Department of Education has outsourced its social studies support function to the Minnesota Historical Society (MHS). The MHS created the Center for Social Studies Education (CSSE) with staff that fulfill the Department of Education contract. The CSSE has an advisory committee made up of representatives from the major organizations focused on K-12 social studies education. MAGE provides one member to this advisory committee.



Financial Plan

First, we will continue to request our annual draw from the endowment held for Minnesota from the National Geographic Society Education Foundation. Second, we will continue to ask for a grant from the Minnesota Office of Higher Education to fund MAGE Summer Institutes. Third, we will continue to seek funding from the Associated Colleges of the Twin Cities to support GEOFEST. Fourth, we will seek other funds from local and national donors for programs as they develop.

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Strengths and Challenges for MAGE and Geography in Minnesota

Strengths

Organized in 1987, MAGE is one of the older geography education alliances. We have established a reputation among our peer organizations nationally and within Minnesota as an efficient organization comprised of individuals with a strong commitment to the goals of the organization. We have a sizable endowment that provides us with approximately \$61,000 per year to underwrite our operational budget and some programming.

The Steering Committee assists the Coordinator in the management of the funds and programs. Members volunteer hundreds of hours each year and provide excellent professional development programming. The members of the Steering Committee like to work as members of a team and have genuine friendships within the Alliance.

Macalester College provides solid support for the staff of MAGE. In addition, the college provides many support functions, fiduciary and others, at no cost. We expect the University of Minnesota will also provide strong support when the alliance moves to the Learning Technologies Media Lab (LTML).

The National Geographic Society Education Foundation provides valuable programming such as Geography Awareness Week that promotes the public awareness of geography.

Many grants received by the Learning Technologies Media Lab have funds for outreach to teachers. We expect that MAGE can assist in these outreach efforts, thereby promoting geographic education while fulfilling the terms of the grants.

The Learning Technologies Media Lab is capable of developing new online learning environments which should revolutionize our professional development programs.

The Alliance has recently completed a self-evaluation and strategic plan under the guidance of the National Geographic Society Education Foundation.

The Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards for Social Studies include geography standards that mandate an independent high school course called Human Geography, a world studies course in 8th grade that is cored by geography, a 4th grade social studies course that is primarily United States geography. In addition, geography standards and benchmarks are required at every grade K-7.

Many high schools offer the Advanced Placement Human Geography (APHG) course with great success. During the past years, the number of schools offering APHG has expanded. The presence of an APHG course in a high school has a positive impact on geography offerings throughout the curriculum. The APHG teachers are strong advocates for geography education in their districts.

Over the years, the Alliance has been led by teachers with vision and who understand the complexities of K-12 education in Minnesota.

The Alliance has a strong reputation among several divisions within the Minnesota Department of Education.

U.S. Representative Tim Walz was a geography teacher and is a strong supporter of MAGE.

MAGE is highly regarded by the leadership of the Minnesota Office of Higher Education.

Challenges

There is a large group of teachers and university faculty in the state who do not believe in separate discipline-based social science courses. They continue to advocate for a blend of history and social sciences which they call social studies. This group dominated the recent revision of the Minnesota Academic Social Studies Standards.

The current Commissioner of Education for Minnesota is a strong advocate of interdisciplinary instruction and chose not to endorse our cooperative common assessment for high school human geography.

In recent years, many high school social studies departments have avoided adding a geography course by changing the name of their world history course to World History and Geography, Global Studies or another similar name. Supposedly, these courses include both the world history and geography standards. In reality, these are just world history courses with a new title. Other high schools ignored the standards because the Minnesota Department of Education did not enforce the standards. The revised standards will be implemented by 2013.

The majority of social studies teachers in Minnesota have little or no knowledge of academic geography. Many social studies teachers believe geography is not as rigorous as history and other social sciences. They are reluctant to support more teaching of geography.

Many school districts are cutting back on professional development funds, increasing class sizes and restricting teachers' time with their classrooms for enrichment programs.

Education in general has received a great deal of criticism and we must work in an environment that is rather negative.

We must continually recruit new members for the Steering Committee and develop a new cadre of leadership for MAGE programs.

BYLAWS

Article 1 - Alliance Name

The organization shall be known as the Minnesota Alliance for Geographic Education (MAGE).

Article 2 - Purpose of the Organization

MAGE is an organization designed to facilitate geographic literacy.

Article 3 - Membership in the Minnesota Geographic Alliance

Membership in the Alliance shall be open to persons interested in promoting geographic education.

Article 4 - Administrative Structure of the Minnesota Geographic Alliance

The Alliance shall be administered by: a State Coordinator or State Co-Coordinators, an Administrative Assistant and a Steering Committee. Administration of the Alliance shall be carried out in cooperation with the National Geographic Society Education Foundation (NGSEF).

Article 5 - Selection and Duties of Administrative Personnel

Section 1. Alliance coordinator(s) shall be nominated by the Executive Committee and a representative from NGSEF. The Executive Committee shall solicit vita of persons interested in the coordinator position from the geographic education community in Minnesota. After careful review of all applications, the Executive Committee shall recommend a person or persons to the MAGE Steering Committee. Successful nominees must be approved by a majority of the members of the MAGE Steering Committee.

Section 2. The Administrative Assistant of the Alliance shall be selected by the MAGE Coordinator or Co-Coordinators at the principal MAGE host institution.

Section 3. The MAGE Steering Committee members will have an office term of three years, which can be renewed at the conclusion of each three year term. The Secretary of MAGE shall be elected from the Steering Committee by the Steering Committee. Members of the Steering Committee shall chair sub-committees, as needed, to fulfill the mission and goals of MAGE.

Section 4. The duties of the various administrative personnel shall be as follows: The principal coordinator shall be the chief fiscal agent and primary administrator of the Alliance. The principal coordinator shall set the agenda and chair all meetings of the MAGE Steering Committee, which is the governing body of the Alliance. The Administrative Assistant shall provide support services to the Coordinator or Coordinators, deal with the daily routines of the central office, and assist with MAGE communications. The MAGE Secretary will record the minutes of each meeting and publish a summary for its members. Operating within the parameters established by NGSEF, the Steering Committee shall be responsible for the governance of the Alliance. All matters of policy and operation shall be approved by the members of this committee.

Article 6 - Meetings

Section 1. The MAGE Steering Committee shall meet three times each year to consider the business of the Alliance, set policy, and attend to operational procedures. The date, time and location of these meetings will be determined by the members of the Steering Committee. The agenda for each meeting shall be set two weeks prior to the meeting and sent out to all Steering Committee

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members at that time. The minutes for each meeting shall be sent out to all Steering Committee members within two weeks following each meeting.

Section 2. Committees will meet as needed as determined by each committee chair.

Article 7 – Finances

Section 1. The fiscal year will be November 1 – October 31.

Section 2. Prior to July 1st of each year, the annual budget report of the current year will be shared with members of the Steering Committee and The National Geographic Society Education Foundation. At this time the Coordinator(s) will propose a budget for the next fiscal year, based on the income of the fund for Minnesota as determined by the National Geographic Society Education Foundation’s Administrators.

Article 8 - Bylaws Changes

Bylaw changes can occur with a two-thirds vote of the Steering Committee. Proposals for a bylaw change need to be presented at least one meeting prior to the vote.



 MACALESTER COLLEGE



 NATIONAL
GEOGRAPHIC
Education Foundation

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The Minnesota Alliance for Geographic Education