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A Comparative Profile of Education in Grays Harbor county

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A Comparative Profile of Education in Grays Harbor County

**MOTIVATION:**
I have always had a sense of the importance of education. This year, our educational system faces huge budgetary challenges. I wanted to take a look at the correlation between the amount of property tax money that is paid to the school districts of Grays Harbor County. Do the wealthier communities provide their children with a better education?

**EDUCATION:**
How to judge education? It could be quantified by the number of kids that graduate high school. The number of people to go on and succeed in higher education, or the number of people to use the public library might also serve as an indication of the quality of education in the area.

In Washington our kids have been subjected to standardized testing. The WASL. Regardless of merits of the test itself, it is still the only measure of students in our state.

These are the average scores for the entire state. Washington’s students are tested in four areas; reading, math, writing and science. The testing schedule varies from grade to grade and it is not until the 10th grade that students are tested in all four categories in a single year.

**PROCESSES:**
I created a geo-database and dataset with the correct projection, and added my data. As with any GIS project, collecting data and making it usable is at least half the battle. I had block group data and 15 school district boundaries that had to be clipped to separate the values for each district. Another truth about GIS is that if you don’t do something right the first time it’s very hard to correct it. I should have finished clipping by attaching the percentage of values to the correct school district. Once that was complete I was able to continue with the correct values and a population for each district.

I converted data from the census on education statistics that was complete I was able to continue with the correct percentage of values to the correct school district. Once that had to be clipped to separate the values for each district. Another truth about GIS is that if you don’t do something right the first time it’s very hard to correct it. I should have finished clipping by attaching the percentage of values to the correct school district. Once that was complete I was able to continue with the correct values and a population for each district.

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**SOURCES:**
Grays Harbor County: Wade Reuther, GIS Coordinator; Tax Assessor; Auditor
Timberland Regional Library. The Census Bureau.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:**
I would like to thank Dr. Matthew Kelley for his unyielding patience and support.

**SUMMATION:**
I learned more from the process than I did from the project. Planning and time management really need to be adhered to, especially with a long term event. GIS requires a lot of patience, perseverance and determination. If you don’t understand something there is nothing to do but keep trying. I believe my proposal was flawed from the beginning. If I had taken a deeper look at what these variables really said about education, I would have continued to search for data that could have told the story better. As a first dalliance into the world of GIS I learned many lessons and next time I will do it all differently.

**ANECDOCE:**
The WASL averages are lowest when it comes to science. The state average is only 40% proficiency. While going over the data I noticed that McDearry School had a score of 68% for the 8th graders. Since that is such a substantial difference I asked a friend who has two sons in the school. “Oh, that’s Mr. Patterson. He’s fabulous!” Which sums up my findings; a quality teacher can go a lot farther than a pile of money. Therefore, it may be wise to throw the pile of money at the teachers to encourage the best ones to continue what they are doing.