

Panel Discussion

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Several seminar sessions discussed peace and harmony in the use of toponyms. This includes cultural perspectives and the embracing of various regional points of view. Toponymy is a fascinating category within the geographic education curriculum and may be the springboard needed to open dialog regarding the dual name of *East Sea* and *Sea of Japan*. With that said, ways to move forward with examining disputed geographic names may be to use the classroom to showcase dual names within regions such as what is listed in the Virginia Standards of Learning educational curriculum:

Virginia Standards of Learning: WG. 1e The student will use maps, globes, satellite images, photographs, or diagrams to analyze and explain how different cultures use maps and other visual images to reflect their own interests and ambitions. Essential Questions for Students: How do maps reflect changes over time? How are maps and other visual images used to present a particular bias about an area of the Earth's surface?

Essential Knowledge Points for Students:

Place names: Formosa, Taiwan, Republic of China, Palestine, Israel, West Bank, Gaza

Perspectives of place names: Arabian Gulf vs. Persian Gulf; Sea of Japan vs. East Sea; Middle East vs. North Africa and Southwest Asia

Disputed areas: Korea; Western Sahara; Former Yugoslavia; Kashmir

The listed toponyms in the Virginia World Geography curriculum are all examples of disputed areas or features known by multiple names. Many times the local toponym

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was reconstituted after decolonization or devolution. All geopolitical perspectives must be taken into account to open a dialog involving cultural values and/or to avoid greater controversy over the perception of single country ownership or control. Approaching lesson planning for the classroom will also help perpetuate the dialog among students.

Virginia took the specific issue of the dual names of *East Sea* and *Sea of Japan* even further with the 2014 passing of House Bill 11 in the Virginia General Assembly. With the passing of this bill into law, Virginia textbooks adopted after July 1, 2014 must state that the identified body of water is known by both names. Since the dual names were first listed in Virginia World Geography curriculum in 2002, HB 11 validated what geography teachers in Virginia have been teaching for 12 years.

Students have the right to know that there are global features with multiple names. It doesn't verify a dominance of any single name, but is good geography education to present multiple toponyms. We as teachers are not to exclude or ignore the information but also not to have a stranglehold over narrowed curriculum. The stated geography content allows us as teachers to share different perspectives with students and cements the ability for students to explore further the geopolitical picture of a region. The classroom should value content understanding rather than rote memorization of place names without examining the history behind the naming process.

Geographic perspective is an integral part of the Virginia World Geography curriculum as well as the U.S. College Board program of Advanced Placement Human Geography. The courses have features including geopolitics and toponomy. Keeping the discussion of dual named and disputed features in the geography curriculum guarantees students' analysis and greater understanding of geographic place names and international relations.