

2011 NATIONAL BLUE RIBBON SCHOOLS

U.S. Department of Education



**Piedmont Middle IB World School
Charlotte, North Carolina
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools**

An Argument for Learning: Applying a Common Core Standard Across the Curriculum

CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG SCHOOLS (CMS) ADOPTED THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS A YEAR EARLY.

Karen Bailey, 6th Grade English Language Arts Teacher: This year we are 100% common core but we don't really have to. We thought we'd just jump in this year.

Cheryl Lamb, Math Department Chair: CMS has taken argumentative literacy as their main focus of the national Common Core Standard.

Dee Gardner, Principal: And so, no matter if you're in band, or in Spanish, or in Language Arts, or in science, you're learning to get information to identify problems, to find situations that you could, like, debate, and then research your side, come up with solutions, and then check 'em out by going against the other person. And it's taking it down to the middle school level, and it's appealing to their love of drama, and it's just great.

David Milligin, 7th Grade English Language Arts Teacher: It's something that can go across every subject area.

Dee Gardner: We've always done persuasive writing, but now it's like taken persuasive writing to a whole deeper and more intense level. And I see it in every content area, even in orchestra. They have to research, you know, in this symphony, or that piece of opera, how did they achieve that magical moment? It's not argumentative in the sense that they're angry, or something is bad, it's pursuing your belief, and coming up with the evidence that supports what you think will work. Last week we had the Pigman trials.

8th Grade Student: It's like a big to-do at Piedmont. Everybody who has the infamous Mr. Milligan, and now Ms. Whiting as well, knows about the trial, and it's a big deal, and it's a source of friendship, bonding, and animosity amongst several classes.

David Milligan: I created this mock trial, which is not even part of the book.

Megan Whiting, 7th Grade English Language Arts Teacher: David very nicely has let me become part of the Pigman. So my classes actually do *The Pigman* as well, and usually we have one of our classes go against each other.

David Milligan: One class reads the book as prosecuting attorneys, trying to prosecute these two teenagers for contributing to the elderly man's death, while the other class will read the book as the defense. A lot of inferencing, a lot of persuasion—huge persuasion, because every piece of information that they find, they have to spin it to figure out how the prosecution is going to use that same piece of information. The first nine chapters, we don't tell them whether they're prosecuting or defending.

Megan Whiting: They put their heart and souls into this. They get upset, they—there's tears. When you can get a class that excited and that into a book where they're crying, they're laughing, they are, you know, getting upset with each other because they didn't focus on something or "you missed this," or "you need to learn this."

8th Grade Student: It causes a rivalry between the two classes, but it's fun because you get to see well maybe I do want to be a lawyer after like if you've been a lawyer in the mock trial, you see ""may I do want to do this for a living."

David Milligan: This jury finds ... John Connolley and Lorraine Jensen ... Not guilty! [classroom explodes with cheers]. You send your kid to Piedmont, you know, your kid is going to do what they're being taught. They're not just going to feed it back to you. That's something I love about this school.