

## Common Core State Standards reading success in East Haddam

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“Think Cold” reads the title of Marilyn Singer’s first poem about Humboldt Penguins, creatures who inhabit the hot, dry coastal deserts of Peru and Chile in her 2012 collection: *A Strange Place To Call Home: The World’s Most Dangerous Habitats & The Animals That Call Them Home*.

Although, “newly published poetry collection” and “State Standards” seem to be phrases at odds, bright teachers and children show how creativity lives among the standards. Public schools are moving from state to national standards, referred to as “Common Core State Standards”, and most educators are applying these ideas to their current curriculum.

The standards from the Common Core (which have been adopted by public schools in nearly all of the fifty states) such as “speak audibly, and express thoughts, feelings and ideas clearly” can be traced from K to 12th grade. No one could possibly argue against these being important life skills for students of all ability levels.

In order to practice proper speaking and listening skills, some students need to be presented with an alternative text. Picture books are often many times the price of trade paperbacks, but a grant for \$750.00 covered the cost of new picture books for my small reading classes. For more information on CRA’s Teaching Grants, please visit [www.ctreading.org](http://www.ctreading.org).

Educators and parents are asking: will the CCSS completely remove fun from learning? Veteran literacy coach and current classroom teacher, **Kim Eiler** of **Killingly** Public Schools would answer this concern with, “Yes, of course there is fun in standards!”

I have been truly inspired by Kim since meeting her back in November, 2012. Kim’s language arts curriculum has been developed over the past fifteen years for grades K-6, and my co-teachers and I at Hale-Ray High School use Kim’s teaching strategies as part of our high school reading classes.

Working as a high school reading specialist presents me with the challenge of teaching students who are reading at the primary level, alongside others who may be reading on their current grade level, but who have simply failed to excel on reading or writing sections of state standardized tests,

and/or reading and writing assignments in their other content area classes.

Teens who serve as role models for younger students feel empowered and have more confidence than those who are not presented with leadership roles. From Hale-Ray, we are able to take a one mile walk to and from our destination of **East Haddam**

Elementary School, and share beautiful, newly published picture books with **Mrs. Laurie Hall’s** full day Kindergarten class.

Some of my students are reluctant readers and public speakers, yet I am impressed at their ability to share poems and stories with the kindergarten students in our town.

Recently, we shared a book of poetry called *Take Two! A Celebration of Twins* by **J. Patrick Lewis** and **Jane Yolen**. The physical exercise required of the students also enhances learning.

On the recent walk back after our third visit to the elementary school, I discovered that my students had internalized the words “bereft” and “marathon”, from the poem “Fair Is Fair!” “Bereft means that you’re sad, but sad because you are so lonely,” said one of my students.

The student also discussed the word “marathon”, and that in the poem that she read, this word means a “really long running race” instead of a “movie mara-thon” or a “study marathon”. All of the students were able to make connections to the poems and help the five and six year old students to also interpret the poems.



**Kylie and Emily (students) and Amanda Argazzi, Reading Consultant, East Haddam Public Schools. The students are each holding a copy of one of the newly published non-fiction books that is recommended by the International Reading Association for support of teaching the Common Core State Standards.**