

Oct 25, Nov 15, 2012  
Washington Middle School  
four 6th grade classes  
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### Pangaea Puzzle

I visited two classrooms at Washington Middle School for a total of four classes of 6th-graders who are studying earth science this year. I gave each class a presentation about the basic science of geology (i.e. the present is the key to the past, the past is the key to the future), leading them through examples of geologic events that can be inferred from rocks or landscapes (including Steve Kidder's movie of Grand Canyon formation in a sand box). I then led them through the USGS-produced activity of re-assembling Pangaea from the continents based on fossil evidence, finishing with a movie showing the continents drifting apart from 250 Ma until today, and pointing out the relationship between earthquakes and plate boundaries.

Notes: the class periods are only 40-something minutes and start and end at odd times, so it's important to keep track of the time. Also, due to the time limitations, it's imperative that the students cut out and color the continent puzzle pieces ahead of time so they are ready to go. There's a wide range of behavior on the part of the students; some are quiet, pay attention well, and work purposefully on the exercise; others talk throughout the class, don't pay attention, and don't even attempt the exercise until prompted one-on-one. In general, students seemed to enjoy the presentation and had interesting questions.