

Dear Bellevue Families,

I am writing today to communicate changes in our 7th Grade Language Arts curriculum for the 2018-19 school year. A translation of this letter into Spanish and Chinese can be found on our district [website](#).

We are piloting two new books selected by the Bellevue School District 7th Grade Language Arts Book Adoption Committee. Your child will be reading one of these two books. These pilot books better align with the expectations of the Common Core State Standards, College and Career Readiness Standards, expand the diversity of voices in the current curriculum, address the new Washington State Social Emotional Learning Standards and focus on relevance and relationships in the language arts classroom. During the design phase, a 7th Grade Book Adoption Committee comprised of teachers, parents and administration oversaw the selection of instructional materials for the pilot books. These materials for the pilot will be available for perusal at the District Office, Downtown Bellevue Library, Newport Way Library, Lake Hills Library, Crossroads Library and each of the middle school libraries in November. Throughout the 2018-19 school year we will be soliciting feedback about each new book through student and parent surveys in electronic or hard copy form.

Below is a brief overview of each book:

One Crazy Summer by Rita Williams-Garcia

One Crazy Summer is worth reading more than once. It's a gem of a story, subtly offering details about 1968 Oakland yet staying true to the story of three girls hoping to reclaim their mysterious mother's love. Delphine narrates as a responsible, thoughtful, observant girl, wiser than her 11 years. Her sisters, Vonetta and Fern, add humor and delightful age-appropriate tension. The juxtaposition of 1968 Oakland civil rights movement with the journey of the three sisters is seamless. The writing is poetic, the characters are unforgettable, the social-historical references delicate, and the overall story a pleasure to read. The book doesn't finish with a perfectly happy ending, but it is a perfect ending.

<https://www.commonsemmedia.org/book-reviews/one-crazy-summer>

Inside Out and Back Again by Thanhha Lai

Inside Out and Back Again is written in a series of short free-verse poems, which are easy to read, fast-paced, descriptive, and poignant. The short verse poems give much information about life in Vietnam, including the foods, clothing, traditions, the encroaching war, some politics, family structure, and more. Readers will also learn about life as an immigrant as Ha struggles with a new language, eats new foods, meets new kids, deals with attitudes toward Vietnamese immigrants -- and tries to blend Vietnamese customs with new American ones. While the main character is a 10-year-old girl, this story is suitable for boys and readers in a wide age range. Parents should know that this story is filled with beauty and hope even though its backdrop is the Vietnam War.

<https://www.commonsemmedia.org/book-reviews/inside-out-and-back-again>

***If students or parents have a concern about a particular text, please contact your teacher.*

Students will engage with multiple perspectives throughout this unit and explore the central idea of being caught between two worlds. The Common Core State Standards for narrative writing, reading literature, speaking and listening and language will be taught and assessed. The embedded assessments for this unit focus on poetry analysis and self-expression through poetry.

At the end of the pilot period all feedback and data will be reviewed, and a recommendation will be made to the Instructional Materials Committee for the 2019-20 school year. If you have any questions or comments about these pilot books, please feel free to contact me.

Best regards,

Cathy Wellington

Instructional Technology Curriculum Developer, English

wellingtonc@bsd405.org | PHONE: 425.456.4158