

Introduction

A group of Langley staff met throughout the Fall, Winter & Spring of the 2022-2023 school year for this Read Aloud initiative.

They worked to co-create, edit, discuss, and give feedback on the contents and design of this Teacher Resource Guide. Therefore, what you see is a product of many conversations and collaborations. However, we acknowledge this guide is by no means complete or flawless but rather a capturing of our collective understandings throughout the guide development.

We have attempted to create a tool that supports all staff as they facilitate and participate in this Read Aloud. We acknowledge that there is always work to be done in creating more inclusive spaces, and that our understandings of how to do this, will surely continue to grow beyond what is modelled in this guide.

We did this work gathered together on the traditional, ancestral and unceded territories of the məθx̱w̱ey, q̱ʷa:ṉḻəṉ, q̱íç̱əy̱ and səmyəmaʔḻ First Nations. At front of mind during this development process, was the wisdom and expectation from these First Nations that Langley schools are a place of safety and belonging for all Langley students.

We know that Langley teachers arrive at this guide with profound knowledge and experience, and that they will take this resource and build on it, making it their own. We look forward to the ripples of this work throughout the district and wish you all the best in your reading journey!

The following *Introduction Section* outlines the process, decisions and work of the Read Aloud Team.



Introduction: Creation Process

Why a Read Aloud?

Two years ago, a group of Langley Teachers initiated a District Wide Middle School Read Aloud with the novel *The Barren Grounds*. The goals of this Read Aloud were to foster a sense of belonging within school communities, support teacher practice with Indigenous pedagogies and provide equitable middle school access to a meaningful learning opportunity. Importantly, the initiative also saw middle schools and middle year grades across the district participating in ways that best fit their school community; resulting in the initiative manifesting in authentic and unique ways school by school.

Middle School Read Aloud Team:

The learning, feedback, and ultimate success of this Langley specific Read Aloud prompted a September 2022 call out for Langley School District participants to plan a Read Aloud for the 2023-2024 school year. This guide is the result of that team's work.

The Development Team included: classroom teachers, administrators, instructional services teachers, and learning support services teachers. The team met four times through the school year to read, choose, consult, create, and provide feedback for this guide.

Special thank you to the following participants who contributed in some or all sessions that supported the creation of this guide:



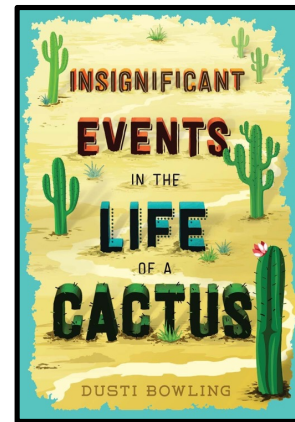
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Introduction: Creation Process

The Middle School Read Aloud Team's first action was co-creating criteria that would support selecting the next Langley Middle School Read Aloud text.

Co-Created Criteria for what makes a good read aloud text:
(Created November 2022)

- Engaging and drives discussion
- Relevant to all grade levels (themes, values, competencies)
- SEL, diversity, inclusion
- Local - Canadian (setting or author)
- Authentic voice/representation
- Paperback
- Length of book
- Something new (not a previous LBOY)
- Meeting needs of different learners (potential audiobook) – SORA
- Entry points for readers
- Context – trauma informed lens



Process:

After voting, reading and voting again - *The Insignificant Events of the Life of Cactus* was selected to be the next Middle School Read Aloud text. With themes of community, resilience, inclusion, and perseverance, this text strongly aligned with the Langley School District Middle School Pillars & Core Values and was viewed as a text that provided many access points for

Langley teachers and students to learn together.

The text was then *evaluated* for social considerations and *connected* with the BC Curriculum for grades 6, 7, 8. Next, the Read Aloud Team gathered to brainstorm and create classroom learning opportunities for Langley students to engage with this story.

Guide Set-up:

The final product is the guide before you. This Teacher Resource Guide is organized into 14 sections. The Introduction, Teacher Resources, Vocabulary Strategies, Comprehension Strategies, Appendix and Annotated Resource List were created directly for teacher reference and user ability.

The Opening Activities, as well as Section 1 through 6, are meant to support the ongoing weekly work of the Read Aloud.

Support materials for each activity are found directly within each section. This may include graphic organizers, supplementary materials and excerpts from the text itself. We have also tried to hyperlink additional resources for teacher use. **All activities and resources are included as suggestions.** Teachers are encouraged to adapt and find meaning for their own classrooms and student population.

The only supplementary material that are not found in each subsequent section are supporting vocabulary materials. Please see the end of this guide under Vocabulary for printable terms.

Introduction: Guiding Documents

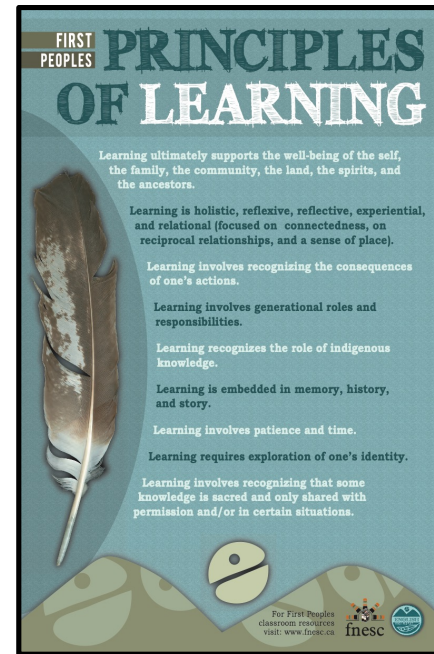
The **First Peoples Principles of Learning (FPPL)** are embedded in all K-12 curriculum in BC. The principles are versatile and inform not only content (what we teach) but also pedagogies (how we teach).

The use of FPPL in this guide exist mainly in the inclusion of *Talking Circles* as an effective teaching strategy (pedagogy).

Talking Circles align with specifically with FPPL:

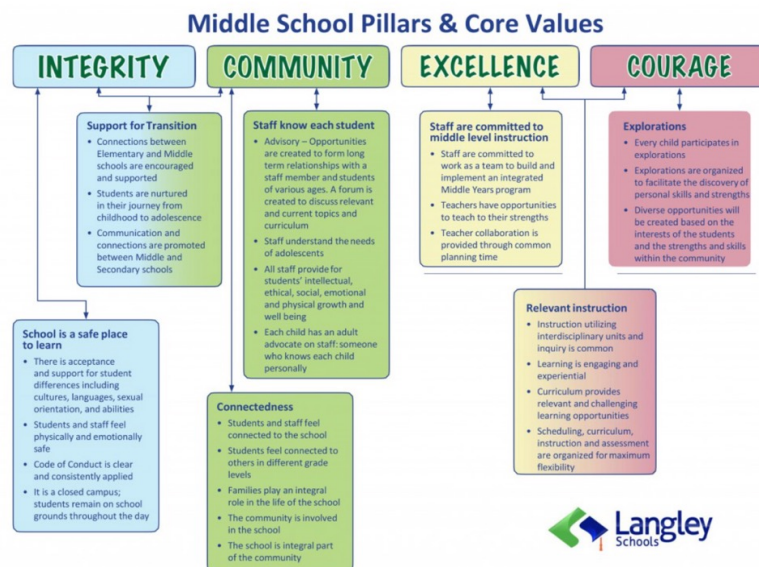
- Learning supports the self... the community... the ancestors*
- Learning requires the exploration of one's identity.*

In places where specific activities were designed with FPPL content, it is explicitly named to support connection and learning around these principles.

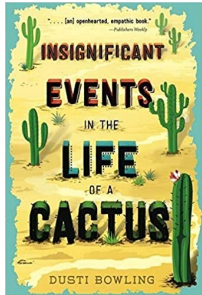


The **Middle School Pillars** were key considerations in the planning of activities for this Read Aloud text.

The themes of this novel include: belonging, community, inclusion and friendship. These overarching ideas strongly align with Langley School Districts values of Middle Years education!



Introduction: Copy of Evaluation



Insignificant Events in the Life of a Cactus - Dusti Bowling

RECOMMENDED

Reviewed by: Middle School Read Aloud Working Group When:
January 12, 2023

Evaluate whether or not portrayals of First Peoples:

- > are consistent with First Peoples' values and attitudes (cultural portrayals);
- > recognize First Peoples as integral and contributing participants of contemporary society;
- > recognize diversity among First Peoples - distinct societies, communities, ways of life, languages;
- > recognize First Peoples as enduring, not vanishing or assimilated;
- > provide a valid description of Individual First Peoples' lives, past or present. (FNESC, 2016)

First Peoples Representation:

Minor reference to Navajo (reference is positive but narrow)

Evaluate whether or not portrayals of social considerations:

- > are realistic and accurate;
- > are equitable, inclusive, and respectful / emphasize ability and contribution;
- > provide opportunities to develop critical and creative thinking, positive personal and cultural identity, personal awareness and responsibility, social responsibility and communication competencies;
- > have a clear purpose, support instruction & are age appropriate;
- > reflect the complexity of British Columbian / Canadian society;

A Note on Social Considerations and the Langley School District Learning Resource Evaluation:

For more information on a descriptions of **Social Considerations** please go here:
<https://focusedresources.ca/sites/default/files/2022-11/SocialConsiderations.pdf>

For more information on **when** and **why** to evaluate a classroom learning resource in the Langley School District go here:
<https://instructionalservices.sd35.bc.ca/curriculum/locally-approved-resources/>

Introduction: Copy of Evaluation

SOCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ability / Disability

Narrator (Aven) – a person with no arms

Minor Character (Zion) – body image

Main Character (Connor) – a person with

Tourette's Syndrome

Age

Minor Character (Runs the ice cream parlour) suffers from memory loss/possibly Dementia

Sexual Orientation / Gender Identity

N/A

Gender Roles

N/A

Multiculturalism

Unclear the ancestry of main characters; assumption of whiteness of all characters

Belief Systems

Reference to conspiracy theories (pg 11)

Limiting those with disabilities (the sharing of peer and/or societal reactions to persons with varied abilities that model ignorance and lack of understanding)

Socio-economic

Main character family (Aven): almost lost their house

Main character family (Connor): product of divorce, Mom has to work a lot, left alone a lot

Violence

Main Character (Aven): share gory and sometimes graphic made-up stories about how she lost her arms

Crime references: when Aven and Connor investigate secrets of Stage Coach Theme Park, reference the potential for murder, serious crime

Verbal fighting: Aven and Connor get into a verbal conflict; voices raised; name calling (freaks, disabled)

Language and/or Humour

Prominent use of sarcasm throughout (Aven making light of her disability; self-deprecating humour)

'chicken nipple'

Main character (Aven) references feeling like her Mom treats her as a 'child slave' pg. 61

Ethical / Legal

Lies: telling lies about loss of limbs, investigating the secrets of Stage Coach means hiding and not telling the truth to adults.

Damage of property: breaking into the barn, to snoop through stored belongings.

Safety (Impact on student emotional and physical safety is considered. e.g. potential triggers and modeling)

Stage Coach: The setting of the majority of the novel is a 'western theme park', glamorizing the west (no significant mention of Indigenous peoples and/or colonialism)

Body Image and Eating: Several moments in the book explore being nervous to eat in public, eating in front of people – attached to body image and peer judgment

Bullying: varied examples of teasing, pranks, judgement from peers about appearances

Adoption and Foster Care system: Main character waited some time to be adopted and spent time in the Foster Care system 'unwanted'.

Death of Parent: Main character's (Aven) biological mother died in a horse-riding accident.

Infertility: Main character's (Aven) adopted due to infertility, adopted mother discussed openly inability to have children.