

Province-wide challenge:

Drop everything and read!

Victoria September 2, 2008 -- The British Columbia Teacher-librarians' Association has dropped the gauntlet. They are challenging the Premier, members of the legislature, and people across BC to "Drop Everything and Read" for 20 minutes on Monday, October 27.

Teacher-librarians strongly support Premier Campbell's goal of making BC the most literate province in Canada and know the impact that good modeling has on children. Seeing our provincial leaders put aside business for a few minutes to let pleasure reading be their priority will send a powerful message to students and families.

BC teacher-librarians are encouraging not only the Legislature, but all British Columbians to participate in the Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) Challenge. The BCTLA hopes people will organize their workplaces to Drop Everything and Read on the 27th as well. In most schools, the event is held between 11:00 am and 11:20, but the timing is not as important as involvement. Groups who decide to participate should contact local media so that young people can witness adults modeling the importance of reading.

For many years, teacher-librarians have organized special school events to mark National School Library Day (NSLD) on the fourth Monday in October. This is the first year they are taking their celebration to the general public. "I'd love to see the DEAR campaign grow so that in the next few years other provinces take up the challenge as well," said Karen Lindsay, Vice-president of the BCTLA. "Given a few years' practice, I think BC could beat the whole country in a DEAR challenge." Studies indicate that daily silent reading is a very effective way of improving reading comprehension, increasing vocabulary, improving spelling, and broadening understanding of others. "It's very simple, really," asserts Lindsay. "You let students choose what they want to read from a well-stocked school library or from home, and then give them the time and space in which to read -- away from the threat of tests and questions. Even twenty minutes a day of independent reading can make a difference."

Originally the brainchild of Surrey teacher-librarian Bonnie Chapman, the Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) Challenge was tested in many schools across the province on National School Library Day last year. Hundreds of BC students engaged in silent reading from 11:00 to 11:20 that day, and the response was terrific. "You could hear a pin drop!" "Kids didn't want to stop after 20 minutes."

The BCTLA has created a Facebook page to allow people to make their reading count. Point your browser to <http://www.new.facebook.com/event.php?eid=38741982688> or search for "Drop Everything and Read" at www.facebook.com