

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Karen Lindsay, VP Advocacy, BC Teacher-Librarians' Association

Telephone Number 250-479-5942 ext. 239

Fax Number 250-479-6677

Email Address klindsay52@gmail.com

Web site address <http://bctldear.blogspot.com/2009/09/facebook-drop-everything-and-read-bc.html>

BC Teacher-Librarians Challenge the Legislature to Drop Everything and Read!

Victoria, BC, October 5, 2009

October 26, 2009 is National School Library Day and the third anniversary of the **BC Drop Everything and Read Challenge**. DEAR started as a small challenge between BC school libraries in 2007 and has since grown by leaps and bounds. The simple but powerful idea is to promote the importance of literacy by having as many students and adults as possible read at the same time on the same day.

Last year, the Premier, then Minister of Education Shirley Bond and several MLAs participated in the Challenge. This year, Victoria School Librarian Karen Lindsay and the BCTLA are challenging the Legislature to participate in the DEAR Challenge as well. Imagine the message it would send to the entire province about the importance of reading if Members of Parliament took out their books to "Drop Everything and Read" on October 26!

Organizer Karen Lindsay's dream is to have everyone in BC put down their work, turn off their computer screens, pick up a book, magazine or newspaper, and read quietly for 20 minutes on October 26. Picture offices where calls go to voice mail just for those few minutes. "You have reached L & G Real Estate. We are Dropping Everything to Read until 11:20. If this is an emergency, please call (a designee's cell number). Otherwise, why don't you read along with us?"

The event was a huge success last year. Dozens of schools representing thousands of students participated in the DEAR Challenge. Many schools across BC organized special events. Local celebrities - athletes, firefighters, police officers, politicians, parents - came in to read, "big" kids read to little ones, and group read-ins were held on playing fields. The response was uniformly positive, so positive that several schools decided to make silent, free-choice reading part of their weekly routines. Reynolds Secondary School in Victoria has had daily silent reading in their timetable for six years. On DEAR Challenge day, they read twice!

BC Teacher-librarians want to draw attention to the importance of reading in the development of a successful human being. People know that the more you read the better you get at it, and that

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the ability to read with understanding is vitally important to success in the world. Reading improves vocabulary, increases general knowledge about the world, improves one's writing, and is a great way to relax. Not so obvious is its ability to increase the reader's capacity for empathy, stimulate imagination and create new connections in the brain. No wonder reading is so closely linked with economic and social success in adult life – and the Internet has only increased our need to interact with text!

That is why the BC Teacher-Librarians' Association is so committed to this Challenge. It gives kids across the province not only the chance to relax with books of their own choosing, but the opportunity to see the grown-ups around them model how important reading is in *their* lives.

Want to participate? This year's blog is at <http://bctladear.blogspot.com/2009/02/dear-drop-everything-and-read.html> To take the event "viral" the BCTLA has a Facebook page at <http://tinyurl.com/ktj3ea> On Twitter, search BCTLADDEAR.

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To see some of the participation and endorsements from last year go to <http://bctladear.blogspot.com/2008/10/bc-school-trustees-association-has.html>

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