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## Berkeley Drops Everything to Read

By Riya Bhattacharjee  
Friday March 05, 2010

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Mark Coplan

Berkeley Police Department Chief Michael Meehan reads to fifth graders at Washinton Elementary School Friday morning

A police chief, firefighters and city officials in Berkeley dropped everything for about an hour Friday to read.

Berkeley public preschools and elementary schools celebrated DEAR (Drop Everything to Read) Day today, where volunteers read their favorite books to students before class.

Started as a citywide celebration of books and reading in 1994, DEAR Day recently received a proclamation from the City of Berkeley.



By Mark Coplan

Berkeley Unified School District Director of Certificated Personnel Pasquale Scuderi reads to another fifth grade class at Washington.

Organized by the Berkeley School Volunteers, which is a part of the Berkeley Public Education Foundation, the program draws over 1,500 volunteers every year.

In proclaiming March 5, 2010 as DEAR Day, the City Council pointed out the program's connection with the citywide 2020 Vision plan, which includes volunteering as a vital part of closing the achievement gap.

According to Berkeley Unified School District spokesperson Mark Coplan,

Thursday's event saw people of all ages, color, gender and occupation—"from firefighters in uniform to lawyers in suits to retired teachers"—sit down and read for 20 minutes.

"It's a wonderful way to connect with Berkeley's schools, share your love of reading, and serve as a role model for eager young listeners," Coplan said.

The list of readers included Berkeley Mayor Tom Bates, city councilmembers Linda Maio, Gordon Wozniak, Max Anderson, Laurie Capitelli and Kriss Worthington and Alameda County Superintendent of Schools Shiela Jordan. Councilmember Jesse Arreguin read Dr. Seuss' "Oh, the Places You'll Go" while his aide Anthony Sanchez read Harry Potter to children at Washington Elementary School.

District Superintendent Bill Huyett read at Malcolm X Elementary School. Employees of Bayer Pharmaceuticals and members of the Berkeley Rotary Club also showed up to read.

For more information on DEAR Day or to sign up to read, contact Michelle Khazai, Director, Berkeley School Volunteers at 644-8833 or