

Drop Everything and Read

When I was a child, Beverly Cleary was a household name. I couldn't wait for the day of the week my class got to visit my school library and check out another one of her books. The only thing better was being able to buy one of my own during the best time of the year- Scholastic Book Fair Week. In her book, *Ramona Quimby, Age 8*, Cleary coined the phrase, Drop Everything and Read, or DEAR. Over sixty years later, school libraries across the nation still celebrate April 12th, Ms. Cleary's birthday, by encouraging everyone to take time to read. After teaching English for 23 years, I can say, without a doubt, that reading is one of the most important things a child can do. Research shows that reading increases your vocabulary, keeps your brain active, relieves stress, and increases your IQ. Your child can check out his or her favorite books for free at their school library. You can take a book anywhere and get lost in whatever fantasy you choose. Reading to your young child helps them develop a broader vocabulary, helps them develop better reading skills and habits, and paves the way for a lifetime of reading for learning and enjoyment. As April approaches, get ready to Drop Everything and Read. Visit your local library with your kids and check out books they are interested in and excited about. Encourage them to check out books in their school library. School librarians have a passion for reading and books and would love to share that love with your kids. One of the biggest reasons kids don't love to read is because they haven't found books that interest them. Librarians love nothing more than to help a child open up their world by helping them find books they can lose themselves in. Show your enthusiasm for reading and encourage them to put down their phones and video games and grab a book that will not only take them on an exciting adventure but also increase their reading abilities and intelligence. Read with your kids and in front of them. The next time you pull out your phone, read a book on a free app offered by your library instead of surfing the web or posting on social media. Be an example of the importance of reading and literacy. Be the reason that on April 12th, as well as the rest of the year, they Drop Everything and Read.

Ashlee Mullis