

## Press release

The Hague, 14 April 2005

### A language offensive among *VMBO* youngsters gets underway

**In conjunction with a number of prominent organisations and the Purmerend Comprehensive School, *Stichting Lezen & Schrijven* is organising a language event for *VMBO* (pre-vocational secondary education) pupils entitled *Taalkr8!*. The event will be held at W.J. Bladergroen next Wednesday, 20 April, and its objective is to draw pupils' attention to the importance of reading and writing in an appealing way. In our society, being able to read and write is of paramount importance and language skills are an essential part of a young person's future. On 20 April, the whole school will be inspired to use language in an alternative and entertaining way. Recent research has shown that an estimated 10% of 15 year-olds in the Netherlands are functionally illiterate. The *Stichting Lezen & Schrijven* is determined to reduce this figure.**

The day will kick off with a member of Amsterdam's nightlife, who was previously illiterate, telling approximately 160 pupils how his life changed, in a positive sense, when, later in life, he learned to read and write. After this talk, the pupils will participate in a rap workshop and a 'Second Chamber' debate. The debate will be presented by Dolores Leeuwin, well-known from the television programme '*Klokhuis*'. Subsequently, a commercial artist will show the pupils how to translate a text into a cartoon and a journalist and a communication expert will help them compile a newspaper, and write a poem and a press release. Finally, Soundos el Ahmadi a star of the film *Shouf Shouf Habibi* will demonstrate how she learns a script off by heart and Peter Smit, the children's author, will encourage the pupils to start reading themselves.

Margreet de Vries, director of *Stichting Lezen & Schrijven*: "*Lezen & Schrijven* is organising this event because we consider it important that low literacy is tackled and prevented at an early stage. This project is one of the pilot projects aimed at stimulating young people to read and write. One of our functions is to stimulate and we hope that in future several other schools will start to tackle the problem as enthusiastically as the school W.J. Bladergroen, which forms part of the Purmerend comprehensive school." Jaap Slob, joint principal of the school, : "The objective of the day is twofold: we will be made aware how important a good command of the Dutch language is, not only for the subject Dutch, but also for all the other subjects, as these days our teaching methods are all, in some form or another, 'language' orientated. If a pupil is having difficulty reading this affects all his or her other subjects. Moreover, the project day will offer us the opportunity to experiment with other teaching methods in order to make the learning process as appealing as possible, as a result of which our pupils will derive more pleasure from working with our teaching material."

The objective of *Stichting Lezen & Schrijven* is to contribute to the prevention and reduction of low literacy skills. The Foundation is doing this by, amongst other things, establishing concrete projects and stimulating cooperation between the business world, the government and the social sector.

The school W.J. Bladergroen, part of the Purmerend comprehensive school, teaches pupils in the first years of *VMBO* (pre-vocational secondary education). The majority of the children at the school have been designated children with special needs and profit from extra care and support. A remedial teaching centre is linked to the school.

---

**Note for the editorial board, not for publication:**

The programme begins at 9.15 a.m. and finishes at 4 p.m. A number of workshops will be offered several times during the day. You are cordially invited to attend this day. If you wish to do so please apply via [info@lezenenschrijven.nl](mailto:info@lezenenschrijven.nl)

For further information, please contact:

*Stichting Lezen & Schrijven*, Margreet de Vries

003170 – 3022660 / 06 – 249 36 577 [mdv@lezenenschrijven.nl](mailto:mdv@lezenenschrijven.nl), [www.lezenenschrijven.nl](http://www.lezenenschrijven.nl)