

P R E S S R E L E A S E



‘Laten we open kaart spelen’: theme Literacy Week 2009

This years Literacy Week will take place from Monday 7 September up to Sunday 13 September. ‘Laten we open kaart spelen’ (Dutch expression for ‘Let’s speak out’) is the core topic. Illiteracy is still a hidden, two-sided problem. On the one hand, people with difficulties in reading and writing are often afraid to talk about it. On the other hand, their family, friends or colleagues can find it hard to speak about this problem. A special campaign during this Week underlines these two important aspects in fighting illiteracy. If everybody speaks out on the topic, a structural and long-term reduction of low literacy is easier to achieve.

There are 1.5 million low literate adults amongst the Dutch population. Also many youngsters have unnecessary difficulties in reading and writing. 25 percent of the pupils who leave primary school are two years behind on their reading skills. This is unacceptable and the Week is the perfect opportunity to come in action. From reading marathons, local information activities to big billboards. Every citizen in the Netherlands can play his part and is therefore encouraged to participate in the Week. Besides local en regional activities, there will also be some national events. For example, the annual granting of the National Literacy Awards on World Literacy Day (Tuesday 8 September), a special AtoZ railway train and a language and reading event for kids. Further, there will be a symposium for business corporations and the release of new Leeslicht (Reading Light) books. The current programme (in Dutch) can be found on: www.weekvandealfabetisering.nl.

World Literacy Day UNESCO

Tuesday 8 September is International Literacy Day. In 1966, UNESCO named this day to be a day to devote attention to the importance of language, reading and writing skills worldwide. On March 24 of this year, H.R.H. Princess Laurentien of the Netherlands, chair

and founder of the Reading & Writing Foundation, became UNESCO's Special Envoy on Literacy for Development. In this role, she fights for the tackling of illiteracy worldwide. Literacy Week traditionally takes place around International Literacy Day and is organised by the Reading and Writing Foundation, by order of the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.

Note for the editors, not for publication:

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