



## What is the Reading Bear?

The Reading Bear is a citywide early literacy initiative led by a group of dedicated volunteers and supported by high school reading buddies as well as medical-student ambassadors. Our organization consists of parents, principals, teachers, advocates, students, and academics collaborating across communities to create healthier schools for all of Vancouver's youth. Since 2012, we have reached over 2,500 students, organizing ongoing peer reading visits to six elementary schools by students from three high schools.

The Reading Bear was founded on the belief that intergenerational mentoring across communities provides an invaluable means for building compassion, strengthening empathy, and improving lifelong learning and health outcomes. To this end, a key reason for the initiative's early successes is the ambassador program, which we've been developing closely with a growing number of medical students. Showing phenomenal initiative, they have developed ethical practices for The Reading Bear, organized book drives, reached out to their former high schools, and engaged in numerous public speaking opportunities.

### What we do

One of our key objectives is to transfer early literacy into the home, and we aim to accomplish this by providing each child with a special teddy bear to read to at home – The Reading Bear. We pair kindergarten students with youths in grades 5 and above in mutually beneficial peer reading relationships. Together students experience the joys of mentorship, while building a love of reading and improving their sense of belonging in the larger community.

### Our goals

To strengthen Vancouver's Healthy City Model by developing relationships among youth from schools across the city.

To promote the development of character and the core values of empathy and compassion.

To promote early childhood school readiness and success.

To foster relationship building and create collaborative communities with existing literacy and community based programs.

### Our mission

To foster a more conscientious and compassionate society by promoting early literacy, social wellbeing, and emotional health via peer reading.

### Why peer reading?

According to Dr. Adele Diamond, a developmental cognitive neuroscientist at University of British Columbia, a peer-reading buddy can have a fundamental impact on a child's success in learning to read. Peer reading affects not only children's early literacy skills, but can promote social and emotional development.



Please visit us at our website for more information:

<http://www.thereadingbear.ca>