

Reaching out to public schools and my mission to help our children

It is no wonder why so many public schools are in such distress for funds. While government money is being pulled back FOR YEARS! Schools are relying on donations which generally come from parents attending the schools and teachers reaching back into their own pockets. You may remember the movie *Freedom Writers* which was based on a true story. Actress *Hilary Swank* played the lead role of teacher *Eric Gruwell* from *Wilson High School*, located in a low-income and impoverished section of Long Beach, California where avoiding gunfire was all too real. Ms. Gruwell took on a second job just to buy books for her students so that they could dare to take the chance to learn and learn the loving of reading.

I knew that I wanted to help these public schools in my own way. I cannot remember how many calls I had to make to the State Capitol during *Governor Schwarzenegger's* first year. After about my fourth time of being transferred around, the person on the other end of the phone finally got that I wanted to donate funds to the public schools from my book sales. *Hilary McLean* was thrilled and introduced me to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction *Jack O'Connell*. I remember flying down to meet him at Kentwood Elementary School. *Kentwood Elementary* has Kindergarten through 5th grade classes. I met with their librarian who was going to retire that year. She shared proudly about the 750 books that they had for their students. Most of these books were given by parents and citizens of good will. I look back and remember how their library was so small and that all of the students had to share this one small area for their reading and study hall. The librarian described how the classes had to take turns. I will never forget it. Some students even had to wait a while before they had this opportunity.

After speaking with the librarian, I met *Quentin White*, a 4th grader who was an avid reader. Quentin was very proud to meet the State Superintendent and shared his appreciation of my goal to donate to public schools. Quentin wanted to be an actor but knew the importance of education. It was the State Superintendent *Jack O'Connell* who first helped me think about aligning myself with a high profile celebrity to help me with my mission: getting funds for our public schools.

Without any help from outside of our government, can you imagine how much more distressed they would be? It is my goal to reach other people and get them to donate. Maybe not as much as I am doing by giving 50% of my book profits to the non-profit *A World Fit For Kids*, but perhaps a smaller amount.

I will always be grateful for the librarian and *Quentin* shedding more light on the situation as well as the principals, teachers, and government heads who really want to help our public schools. For me, I want to focus on our children here in the US. I have heard that some people feel that our children are spoiled and that they do not appreciate what they have. Yes, it may be harder to get our children's attention when discussing their education but does that mean we quit on them? Not for me and not for those of you who believe in our own kids! Once my book **Cooking With Ellamarie, Celebrities, and Kids** is complete, I hope that you will purchase one and help our own academic problem. You will be helping enrich our kids' lives! We can help honor and respect so many teachers such as *Ms. Gruwell* not only for taking the hard job of teaching our kids but also for doing without themselves in order to give kids the will and hope to pursue their dreams.