

**Ceremony of Awards "Escribo en Español" - 16th Edition**  
**Seattle Art Museum**  
**May 3, 2014**

Estoy encantado estar aquí con ustedes y de poder dirigirme hoy a este selecto y excepcional grupo de profesores y estudiantes del estado de Washington.

Quiero expresar mi gran satisfacción de ver que ustedes están estudiando la lengua española. Yo también estudie español y sé por mi experiencia personal que no es nada fácil. Mis más sinceras felicitaciones a todos por los premios y honores que ustedes van a recibir. También tenemos que reconocer a los maestros y especialmente los padres por su gran apoyo. Muchas gracias a todos.

I would like to offer a warm welcome to all of the students and their families, educators, staff and state elected officials to our 16<sup>th</sup> annual "Escribo En Espanol" awards program. We are honored that you are all here to help us recognize the illustrious, hard-working youth in this room.

I would also like to thank the Center for Spanish Studies at the University of Washington in Seattle for their sponsorship, as well as the officials from the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (Alan Burke, deputy superintendent) who have taken their time to make these awards possible. We are grateful to have with us today Luis Fernando Esteban, Honorary Consul of Spain to the state of Washington. Consul Esteban has been a huge supporter of this program over the years, and has been a great help to my office on all things related to Spain for some time now.

Many of you have come very far to join us. I see two of our youngest prize winners are from Sharpstein Elementary, way over in Walla Walla, and another from Edison Elementary in Kennewick. One of our honorable mention winners hails from Okanogan High School way up in the north central part of our state. Thanks to all of you, and your teachers and families as well, who have traveled so far to join us here in Seattle. It is quite fitting that we are at the Seattle Art Museum in the midst of this incredible *Miró (Mee-ROH), The Experience of Seeing* exhibit. What a treat it is to see all of these great pieces from Madrid.

One thing that I really appreciate about this competition is that it gets widespread participation by both those who speak Spanish as their first language and by those who are learning Spanish as part of their studies in school. Those who are non-native speakers have immersed themselves in both the language and culture and are to be especially commended for engaging in this

extraordinary effort to compete and be recognized today. I am proud of each and every one of you for your participation!

Learning at least one other language is probably one of the most important skills you can acquire, especially in this global world. It is a skill that can be both challenging and rewarding. I know, as I have learned a little Spanish as an adult. The refinement of my own language skills is a never-ending pursuit and I have had great help from many patient people in doing so, including some who are in this room. It helps to be bilingual and, in many respects, multicultural in order to take advantage of all of the opportunities that will arise in the coming years.

A thorough knowledge of Spanish is especially important in our state, where Spanish is the top language spoken after English. Some Washington school districts are now predominantly Hispanic, as much as 90 percent.

In preparing your art, essays and photos for today you were all asked to work around the theme: "This is My Family." Families today come in many forms, both the traditional family with a father and mother and one or more children and the non-traditional, such as a foster family or a blended family that has been formed when parents remarry and bring together children from a previous marriage or relationship.

With a family you learn so much from each other and have a built-in network of friends and supporters. Families can be very large or very small. Some – in fact most – can be very complicated. But they all have a central place in each of our lives.

I am proud of all six of my children, 19 grandchildren and new great grandson. My family life is incredibly important to me, just as your family is important to each of you.

It's been said – and I can't help but agree – that if you have a family that loves you, a few good friends, food on your table and a roof on your head, you are richer than you think.

Your families are reflected in each of your essays, art work and photography. Each is very, very special; otherwise you would not be here. Again, congratulations to all of you.

The lessons you have learned in preparing your entries, and the lessons you are teaching us through your strong work, are testimony to you, your families, and what you are able to achieve. Your achievements are a gift to Washington and we are a better place for that. We thank you. Mil gracias.