



United States of America

Margaret Spellings
Secretary of Education



Margaret Spellings is the U.S. Secretary of Education and the first mother of school-aged children to serve as Education Secretary. Secretary Spellings is working to ensure that every young American has the knowledge and skills to succeed in the 21st century. She has partnered with states to implement and enforce the No Child Left Behind Act, which commits U.S. schools to bringing all students up to grade level or better in reading and math by 2014. The law has led to rising test scores and shrinking achievement gaps in states across the country. Secretary Spellings has been a leader in reform to make education more innovative and responsive, supporting teachers with new financial incentives for gains in student achievement and parents with new educational choices and options. She announced new rules to ensure that students with disabilities and English language learners are educated to the highest standards. Prior to her tenure as Education Secretary, Spellings served as Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy. From the White House and the Statehouse to the school board and college campus, Spellings has been involved with education policy at every level.

Inclusive Education: *Measuring Success for All Students*

Inclusive Education begins with recognizing that all students, regardless of race, gender, family income, disability, or achievement level, are academically capable. The theme of this conference, "Inclusive Education: The Way of the Future," highlights a shared commitment among global educators to not only adopt this practice, but to work together as partners.

Studies illustrate that parents and teachers of students with disabilities were more likely to perceive students as "more disabled" when placed apart from their peers and "more capable" when placed in an inclusive classroom. These perceptions shape the expectations we have for our students and more importantly, what they expect of themselves.

In the United States, the 1975 passage of the Individuals with Disabilities Act guaranteed students with disabilities a free, appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment, and required parents and teachers to develop an educational plan tailored to each student's needs and abilities.

But access alone does not increase achievement, and it was only recently that we began holding schools accountable for providing students with disabilities with a quality education. In 2001, the No Child Left Behind Act in the United States, required states to measure progress for every student group, including children with disabilities. As a result, educators are now developing more effective ways to measure achievement for these students.

Given the inclusion, encouragement, and opportunity to succeed, students with disabilities have demonstrated dramatic gains. Our Nation's Report Card shows that reading scores for fourth-graders with disabilities increased dramatically between 2000 and 2006, and the achievement gap between these students and their peers declined by a third.

This conference provides an opportunity for policymakers to challenge ourselves just as we challenge our students. Best wishes for a productive, rewarding event.