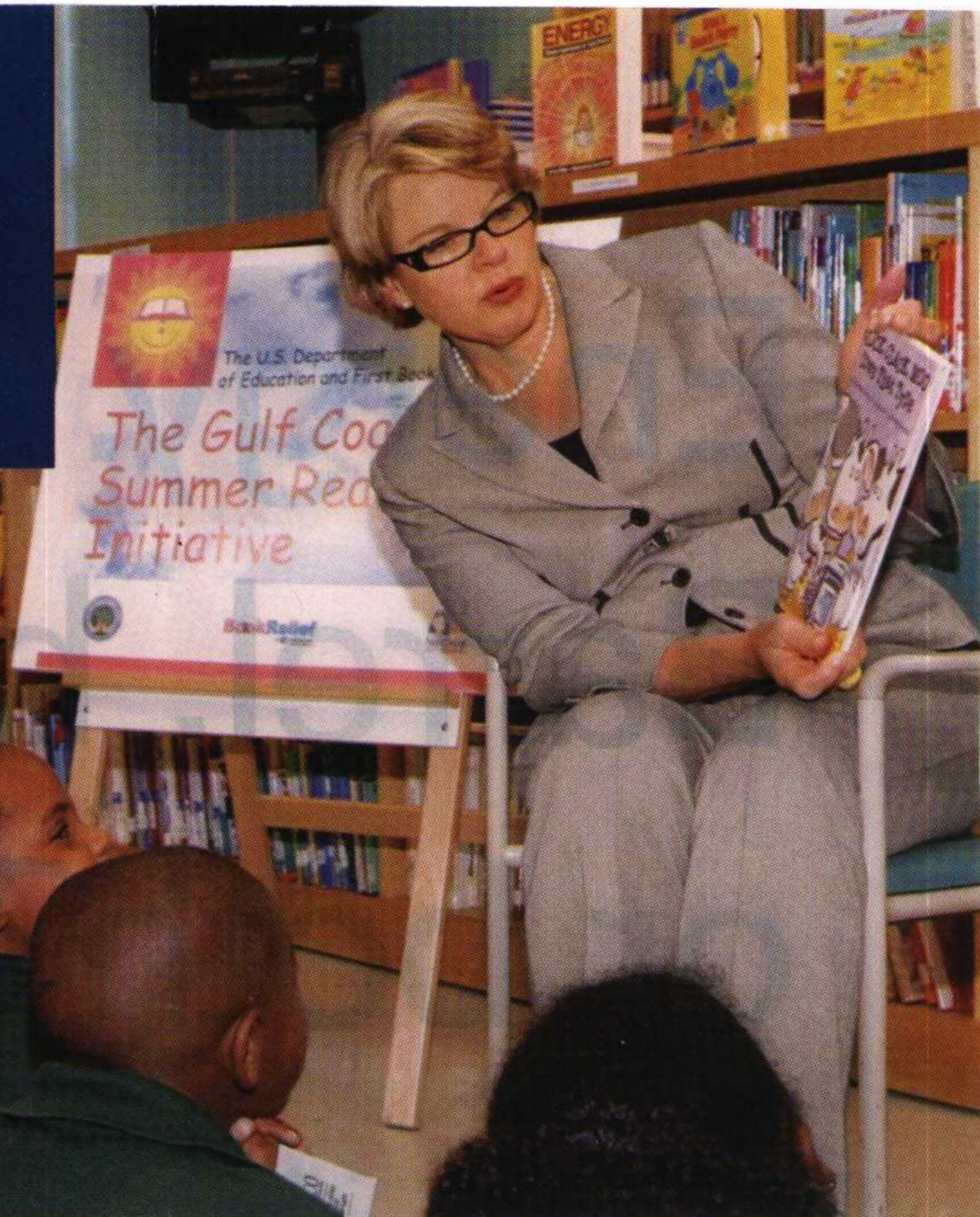


# Shaping the Future



U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings reads to a classroom at Belle Chasse Elementary in New Orleans.

## Top Educator Wants to Mold Minds with No Child Left Behind

// by FRANK MCCOY

The centerpiece of President Bush's education policy, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) act from 2002, is up for re-authorization this year, and the administration is in a full-court press to get the once-hailed, now-controversial legislation renewed.

One state, Utah, has withdrawn from some aspects of the law, risking the loss of federal education funding, and criticisms of the legislation range from a failure to fully fund it to fears that teachers are merely "teaching to the tests."

But just as NCLB ignites fury across a wide spectrum, so too does it draw support from both sides of the aisle. Surprisingly, a number of mainstream Hispanic groups, many of them cool in general to the Bush Administration, see NCLB – and its rigid insistence that each student be proficient in English – as momentous legislation that rivals 1954's landmark *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* decision in making education fair.

In an exclusive interview with *Hispanic Business*, U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings defended the act, drawing upon language she used in a March speech: "By

2050, the majority of our population will be African American and Hispanic. If we don't improve minority access to higher education now, then we will become a poorer, more divided nation of haves and have-nots."

The key to countering that scenario, to remaining globally competitive, she says, is NCLB, which affects all public K-12 students. It makes individual states accountable for how students perform on annual achievement tests, judges schools' teaching effectiveness, penalizes them if they don't hit certain benchmarks, and promises to raise all students to grade level in reading and math by 2014.

While it's a critical issue for the nation, it's especially critical to Hispanics.

The National Council of La Raza reported in 2005 that, after non-Hispanic whites, the nation's 11 million Hispanic pupils, who can be of any race, comprised the second-largest group in public K-12 schools. Of that group, nearly half of all Hispanic students were learning English and they equaled 79 percent of all English-language learners.

### Measuring Measurements

"What gets measured gets done," Secretary Spellings says.

But each state uses different standards to come up with NCLB measurements, and often "obvious" statistics aren't so obvious on closer inspection. »

