

Dear McAllen School Board Candidate,

As the founders of RGV PUEDE (Parents United for Excellent Dual Education), we are emailing each candidate running for the MISD School Board. Our McAllen PUEDE members would like to know your answers to these two questions:

1. **What is your vision for Dual Language Education in McAllen ISD?**
2. **Practically speaking, what would you do for MISD's Dual Language Program if elected?**

As a chapter of RGV PUEDE, McAllen PUEDE is a parent-led grassroots organization. We are not affiliated with any political party. We have no plans to officially endorse or oppose candidates. Our goal is simply to inform the community by sharing each MISD School Board Candidate's response to this email. **Please reply with your responses to the two questions above within the next two weeks (i.e., no later than March 18th).** If you are willing and able to provide your statement in both English and in Spanish, we would appreciate it! If not, we will provide a translation so that all our members have equal access. (If you choose not to respond, we will simply list "No response" under your name).

RGV PUEDE currently has more than 200 members, with roughly 100 in McAllen. My wife and I are also McAllen parents, with a 1st grader in the Dual Language Program at Sanchez Elementary this year and a younger son who will start Kindergarten there next year.

As you may already know, MISD currently offers Dual Language at seven elementary schools (Fields, Gonzalez, Jackson, McAuliffe, Milam, Perez, and Sanchez) and one Middle School (Fossum). MISD's publicly available [Strategic Plan](#) indicates the district's commitment to "implement a high quality dual language program at selected elementary campuses and expand the dual language program into middle schools and high school." McAllen PUEDE supports these goals and is looking for MISD Board Members to do three things in particular:

1. Ensure the quality of the dual language program on campuses where it is already offered.
2. Extend the dual language program to more campuses (especially on McAllen's South Side, which is underserved in this regard even though dual language programs have been empirically shown to lead to more success for English language learners than the early exit programs in place on these campuses).
3. Remain steadfastly committed to the goal of expanding the dual language program into high school by 2021-2022 (see page 40 of MISD's Strategic Plan).

Since 2016, McAllen PUEDE has been working with both UTRGV and MISD to support, improve, and extend dual language programs from Pre-K to 12th. You can read more about our work in the attached History of RGV PUEDE, as well as these recent news articles:

[Dual-language program is making McAllen's Sanchez Elementary very popular](#)
[UTRGV professors recognized for their work in bilingual education](#)

On behalf of McAllen PUEDE, we look forward to our continuing partnership with the MISD School Board. Please feel free to get in touch with any questions or concerns. And good luck in the election!

Respectfully,
Alex Stehn & Mariana Alessandri

Place 1: Juan "Johnny" Cano vs. Marco Suarez

Juan "Johnny" Cano

I would like to meet with McALLEN PUEDE, listen to members concerns and answer questions that they have. Please send me an invite either through email or by cell.

Marco Suarez

1. My vision for the dual language program is to continue to offer it to those students and families who wish to participate in it by making it available at various campuses across the district.
2. If re-elected, I would continue to support the funding and training necessary to continue to make this program successful and available to all students that wish to participate.

Place 2: Lynse Guerra vs. Conrado "Ito" Alvarado

Lynse Guerra

1. Dual Language education is an important program for McAllen ISD. I believe the program needs to be closely monitored to ensure that the students are receiving a quality education and to determine if expansion of the program is warranted.
2. I would work to ensure that Dual Language is offered at enough schools to meet the demand and interest of parents who want to give this important learning opportunity to their student. School board trustees need to be reviewing the budget annually to ensure proper funding for this program. We need to be monitoring enrollment trends. For parents who withdraw their students from the program, we need to be conducting exit interviews to determine what the school district can do to ensure student needs are being met and to keep more children in the program.

Conrado "Ito" Alvarado

1. I support the Strategic Plan developed by McAllen ISD and remain committed to implementing a high-quality dual language program at the seven elementary schools and one middle school, that currently offer our Dual Language program. I remain committed to ensuring these current programs remain of the highest quality and have the continued support of the McAllen ISD School Board. In addition, I am committed to the Strategic Goal of expanding the Dual Language Program into an high school by 2021-2022. Also, Dr. Gonzalez and his staff are working to expand the program by adding an elementary school in the McAllen South Side, and I will support his recommendations.
2. If re-elected, I will continue to support the Dual Language Program of McAllen ISD, as outlined in our Strategic Plan. I have voted to support the efforts of Dr. Gonzalez and his administration to offer a high-quality Dual Language Program for our students and parents of our district. I will continue to support the remaining goals of the Strategic Plan and expand the programs in the high school, South McAllen (elementary school), and possibly another middle school. Also, I will continue to be accessible to any parent or individual with ideas to improve our Dual Language Program and will continue support the efforts of RGV PUEDE (Parents United for Excellent Dual Education).

Place 4: Tony Forina vs. Gina Karam Millin

Tony Forina

1. My vision for dual language is to continue to serve the families that are in the program and a steady growth of new families to come into the program. As a former UTRGV employee, I understand the bicultural, bi-literate and bilingual promise that our region should fulfill.

2. I would ask the superintendent to support the program with marketing dollars so that we can see further development and potential growth of the program.

Gina Millin

Growing up in the Valley, I understand the importance of being able to converse in both English and Spanish. A concrete reason is that being bilingual exposes one to better employment opportunities. Equally important to me, however, is the more abstract idea that speaking two or more languages cultivates an appreciation of other cultures and expands one's worldview. The latter has been particularly beneficial to our region, where we live peacefully and in a mutually beneficial manner with our neighbors to the south.

UTRGV is a key player in both of these aspects by both preparing our children for the workforce and contributing to the open-mindedness of our community, as it has evolved to become a bicultural, biliterate, and bilingual university. To align with the mission of UTRGV, McAllen ISD ("MISD") must strive toward full implementation and growth of its Dual Language Program, because it is in the best interest of its students, many of whom will attend UTRGV. In doing so, MISD will ensure that our community's children are afforded every opportunity to compete on a global scale. It is my belief that nothing can prepare our students better for college and future employment than being able to read, write and speak fluently in two languages upon graduation.

1. My Vision: Dual-Language programs promote proficiency in listening, speaking, reading and writing in both English and Spanish. I envision MISD, with the help of community partners such as PUEDE, fully implementing Dual-Language so that any student or family seeking this path may find it readily available in a vertical team format. This model would require elementary schools to feed into at least one middle school in their team and, eventually, to each of the three main high schools. In the scenario I envision, students would progress in the same vertical team with the same cohort of peers, all of whom are bilingual. Some believe that it is too difficult to implement such a paradigm at every campus, but, at a minimum, Dual-Language should be offered in at least one vertical team.

Because of my interest in McAllen ISD's Dual-Language program, I obtained current enrollment data from MISD through an Open Records Act Request several weeks ago. I have attached the data showing enrollment by grade level and school for your review. I was relieved to see that there is plenty of interest in the program. I believe MISD can increase interest by incorporating Dual-Language into our Gifted and Talented program. There is no reason why parents of identified children should have to choose between a Dual-Language class and a GT class. MISD could renew its leadership role in our region by offering both to our MISD families, which is an option no other district provides.

2. My Support: I understand that UTRGV PUEDE is committed to encouraging community engagement in support of Dual-Language Programs in our schools. It has been my experience that, generally, MISD underperforms when it comes to engaging talented members of our community to volunteer knowledge and experience in their areas of expertise. As a MISD Trustee, I will make it my mission to help MISD improve in this regard. Specifically, I will seek information and guidance from PUEDE and other organizations that wish to improve and expand our Dual-Language Program so that MISD meets and exceeds the goals set out in its Strategic Plan. Factors that will contribute to success in this regard will include ensuring that the most qualified teachers are serving our Dual-Language population, assigning a dedicated director who truly sees the value of Dual-Language to oversee the program at all participating schools, and continuing to measure the success of the program by evaluating the academic achievement of the students engaged.

The descriptions of Dual-Language Programs available from other Texas school districts are very limited. Thus, I am willing to perform further research to understand how MISD can best collaborate with PUEDE to create the most innovative Dual-Language program at MISD. One of the biggest problems MISD faces is the loss of students and related funding to other school districts.

I foresee MISD's Dual-Language program growing into an asset that will address this existential threat by retaining and attracting high-achieving, intellectually curious students and families. The result will be a school district that more closely aligns the mission of creating more practical educational and employment opportunities for each student and fostering a more worldly and empathetic world view in everyone involved.

Place 5: Don Delaney vs. Daniel D. Vela

Don Delaney

Thanks for contacting me. I support MISD's Dual Language Education program, but I am not an expert on its functioning nor do I know how successful it has been except from hearsay. If I were on the board, I would recommend that the District contact Robert Ramirez regarding the Early Spanish Reading program currently in use at PSJA. Mr. Ramirez is a very qualified and honest person who has been offering districts this program, which was developed by his late father, Alfonso Ramirez (a school superintendent and mayor of Edinburg). Feedback on its benefits has been positive so far. You can contact Robert at (xxx) xxx-xxx. You can call me when you wish at (xxx) xxx-xxx.

Daniel D. Vela

If I may answer in short, I fully support and hope to expand the Dual Language program. It is my hope that MISD will use the program to attract new students and will enhance the educational experience of those already with MISD.