

RGV PUEDE sent each McAllen ISD School Board Candidates this email (see their answers below):

Dear McAllen ISD School Board Candidate,

As the co-founders of [RGV PUEDE](#) (Parents United for Excellent Dual Education / Padres Unidos para una Educación Dual de Excelencia), we are emailing each 2025 McAllen ISD School Board candidate. We are also McAllen ISD parents, with two boys (ages 10 and 12) enrolled in Dual Language Programs at Sanchez Elementary and Fossum Middle School.

Our McAllen PUEDE community would like to know your answers to these questions:

1. **What's your vision for bilingualism, biculturalism, and biliteracy in McAllen?**
2. **Practically speaking, what would you do for McAllen ISD's Dual Language Program if elected?**

RGV PUEDE is not affiliated with any political party, and we neither endorse nor oppose candidates. We are a parent-led 501(c)(3) nonprofit whose mission is "to educate and organize parents, families, and communities to support, improve, and extend dual language bilingual education programs from Pre-K to 12th across the Rio Grande Valley." Roughly 600 parents and community members are currently subscribed to RGV PUEDE's email list; approximately 250 of us make up McAllen PUEDE. We plan to educate McAllen residents by: 1) posting each MISD School Board Candidate's answers to the above questions to the RGV PUEDE website, 2) sending each candidate's answers to the McAllen PUEDE email list, and 3) sending a message to McAllen PUEDE's WhatsApp group with this information.

Please reply with your answers to the two questions above by Sunday, March 30th. If you are willing and able to provide your answers in both English and in Spanish, we would appreciate it. If not, we will provide a translation so that our bilingual community has equal access to your position. (If you choose not to respond, we will simply list "No response" under your name).

A good place to start familiarizing yourself with McAllen ISD's Dual Language Program is with the district's own [promotional video](#). MISD currently offers Dual Language at 7 out of 18 elementary schools (Fields, Gonzalez, Jackson, McAuliffe, Milam, Perez, and Sanchez), 1 out of 6 middle schools (Fossum), and 1 out of 4 high schools (Achieve). MISD's publicly available [Strategic Plan](#) indicates the district's commitment to "increase the percentage of students participating in dual language programs" (page 13), but our recent Freedom of Information Act requests for enrollment figures have revealed that program enrollment is flat or declining. We are thus looking for the McAllen ISD leadership to do three things:

1. Increase support for the Dual Language program on the campuses where it is already offered.
2. Follow MISD's strategic plan to increase the percentage of students participating in the program. Just under 1500 MISD students (~7% of all students in the district) currently participate in dual language, whereas a full-scale dual language program could serve over 50% of all MISD students and receive an additional \$3 million dollars per year in state funding thanks to [HB3](#).
3. Increase district-wide equity by extending the Dual Language program to more campuses, especially in South McAllen, which is grossly underserved in this regard. (Largely because of this inequity, only 15% of McAllen ISD students classified as "Emergent Bilinguals" currently participate in dual language even though studies have shown it to be more successful than the early exit/ESL programs in place at most MISD campuses).

Since 2016, RGV PUEDE has been working with both UTRGV and McAllen ISD to support, improve, and extend Dual Language programs from Pre-K to 12th. You can read more about our work in the [News and Articles](#) section of our website, which includes these links:

[Parents Urge McAllen School Board to Grow Dual Language Program](#)
[UTRGV brings together parents and school districts to support Dual Language](#)
[McAllen Parents Voice their Concerns: Asking for more Dual Language Middle Schools](#)
[Dual-language program is making McAllen’s Sanchez Elementary very popular](#)
[UTRGV professors recognized for their work in bilingual education](#)

We look forward to our ongoing work as partners with McAllen ISD. Please feel free to get in touch with any questions or concerns. And good luck in the election!

Sincerely,
Dr. Alex Stehn & Dra. Mariana Alessandri
Co-founders of RGV PUEDE (www.rgvpuede.org)

Place 3: Allena Cano vs. Robert Carreon

Allena Cano

Thank you for the opportunity to share my vision for McAllen ISD’s Dual Language Education Program, should I be elected to serve on the MISD School Board, Place 3. I’m especially grateful to connect with the PUEDE community on this important issue.

This program resonates deeply with me. I come from a multicultural family—my father, Eddie Cano, is Hispanic and grew up speaking Spanish, while my mother, Jan Cano, is Anglo and spoke only English. After they married, they lived in Puerto Rico for two years, where my mother, immersed in the culture, became conversationally fluent in Spanish—an ability she still uses today. Both of my parents grew up in Marfa, Texas during the 1950s and '60s, a time when speaking Spanish in school was not only discouraged but actively suppressed. My father vividly remembers being made to write a farewell letter to the Spanish language and bury it under the American flagpole. Can you imagine?

Ironically, both of my parents became fluent in a second language through immersion—my father in English, and my mother in Spanish. Sadly, despite growing up in a diverse, language-rich border community, I didn’t receive the same emphasis on language learning at home or in school. Today, I’m not fluent in Spanish—a fact that continues to embarrass me. This personal experience has shaped my belief that with intentional action, especially with dual language immersion programs, we can help students gain the skills and confidence to thrive.

McAllen ISD has the resources, talent, and diversity to lead in this area. As a school board member, I will advocate for expanding and strengthening these programs and securing the necessary public and private support. Our students deserve the academic, cultural, and professional advantages that come with strong language skills. Let’s invest in their future together.

1. What’s your vision for bilingualism, biculturalism, and biliteracy in McAllen?

My vision is for McAllen to be a model, not just for the Valley, but for the state and nation. As a border city where over 90% of the population is Hispanic, we don’t just have an opportunity—we have a responsibility to lead and celebrate our cultural and linguistic strengths. We must prioritize early and sustained immersion in English and Spanish from elementary through high school levels to ensure students graduate confidently speaking, reading, and writing in both. Language proficiency opens doors academically, socially, and professionally. Let’s make **“McAllen ISD the #1 Choice to Learn Dual**

Language” by turning our natural advantage into a transformative opportunity so we can ensure every child grows up proud, prepared, and competitive, no matter where life takes them.

2. Practically speaking, what would you do for McAllen ISD’s Dual Language Program if elected?

If elected, I would focus on strategically expanding the program into a seamless, district-wide pathway from elementary through high school. Outreach and marketing will be key—sharing data-driven results, student success stories, and the long-term academic and career benefits. To add even more value, I would propose **community-sponsored international internship opportunities** for upper-level students who have participated in the program. These experiences would offer a real-world incentive for students and highlight the global relevance of language education. We should also celebrate and promote the high-level credentials of our educators, whose expertise is foundational to the program’s success.

To ensure continuity, we must strengthen the middle and high school levels. While the program is well established in elementary schools, only one junior high school, Fossum Middle School, currently has a dual language program. Expansion is needed at other junior highs like Cathey, Morris, and De Leon that feed into our high schools. These campuses are key to maintaining momentum. Since Fossum feeds into Nikki Rowe High School immediate support is needed at to ensure students who come from Fossum can continue without disruption.

In short, I will advocate for a stronger, more connected program across all grade levels, one that provides real opportunity for students and serves as a point of pride and distinction for McAllen ISD. This program can also be a powerful tool for recruitment and retention separating McAllen ISD from competing school districts, charter schools like IDEA, and private schools.

Thank you, PUEDE, for leading this important work. I look forward to supporting a program I believe in wholeheartedly—and one I truly wish had been available to me.

Sincerely,

Allena Cano - Candidate for McAllen ISD School Board, Place 3

Robert Carreon

1. What’s your vision for bilingualism, biculturalism, and biliteracy in McAllen?

I believe the power of any community lies in the diversity of its people; this includes linguistic, cultural and literacy diversity. I was born and raised in the border community of Las Cruces/Mesilla, New Mexico and after spending four years in college in St. Louis, Missouri chose the Rio Grande Valley as the community to begin my professional career as a teacher in large part because I wanted to return to a border community.

In my time as an educator and advocate for public education in the Rio Grande Valley, I have seen the power of dual language programs at the individual, campus and systems levels. In short, students who are able to complete their K-12 education while growing their fluency in two languages are better prepared to meet the demands of the every-changing workforce, as well as bring a unique perspective to the responsibilities of citizens in our democracy and members of our society.

My vision for bilingualism, biculturalism and biliteracy in McAllen ISD is focused on supporting and investing in what works. Given the challenges facing our district, I would work to ensure that effective programs like dual education are adequately funded, adequately supported and championed as wise investments for our community's children.

2. Practically speaking, what would you do for McAllen ISD’s Dual Language Program if elected?

My campaign is focused on four key issues, each of which would provide an opportunity for me to support our district’s dual language program.

- 1) Ensuring strong Student Outcomes
 - a) I will operate with a commitment to improving educational outcomes and experiences for all students;
 - b) Establish an expectation for ongoing progress reports from the Superintendent and Administration on the effectiveness of our district’s programs; and,
 - c) Understanding the student experience in order to make informed decisions as a board member.
- 2) Improving Staff Satisfaction
 - a) Work with the other members of the board to require the Superintendent to develop a staff culture improvement plan, rooted in a thorough analysis of staff experience, especially with disaggregation by program and initiative, like dual language;
 - b) Establish policies that allow us to increase compensation for all staff, as well as those with specialized certifications like dual language teachers;
 - c) Working with the Superintendent and Administration to develop a research-backed staff recruitment and retention strategy.
- 3) Increasing parent engagement and communication effectiveness
 - a) Slow student enrollment declines by regularly analysing parent satisfaction and engagement, especially with disaggregation by program and initiative like dual language;
 - b) Streamlining parent and family communication, by focusing on key priorities of student achievement and student experience; and,
 - c) Championing student safety and well-being, including psychological safety.
- 4) Ensuring structurally sound budgeting
 - a) Ensuring that our staffing decisions are informed by granular data on staff : student ratios at the campus and program level;
 - b) Collaborate with the Superintendent to understand the impact that specific programs and initiatives have on student achievement and experience; and,
 - c) Explore the possibility of capital improvements to modernize our school infrastructure.

Each of these issues represent a major opportunity for McAllen ISD to ensure our legacy of greatness continues through the end of the 21st Century and beyond. In focusing on the dual language program, I believe that taking an approach that balances both research and quantitative data with the voices of parents, families and staff and other sources of qualitative data will allow us to better learn how to support this unique program.

I also welcome any follow up questions and opportunities to talk with you or members of RGV PUEDE.

Best,

Robert Carreon - Candidate for McAllen ISD School Board, Place 3

Place 6: Sofia M. Peña (uncontested)

I am in support of the Dual Language program and even expanding it if possible. I believe that being multilingual gives our kids an advantage and makes them more apt to succeed. I will always support the Dual Language Program and am very proud that we offer it at McAllen ISD.

Place 7: Rojelio Aleman II vs. Roberto Haddad vs. Tiffany Ramos

Rojelio Aleman II did not respond to our questions.

Roberto Haddad

1. What's your vision for bilingualism, biculturalism, and biliteracy in McAllen?

I believe McAllen ISD should be a leader in bilingual education, ensuring that all students—whether native English or Spanish speakers—have access to programs that promote fluency in both languages while fostering cultural pride and academic success. I believe if done correctly, McAllen ISD could potentially market a dual language program in a way that drives enrollment to the district.

My vision includes:

- Reviewing the current programs and developing strategies to either expand or improve efficacy, outcomes, and reach.
- Expanding opportunities for students to become truly bilingual and biliterate, providing them with marketable skills, and preparing them for a global workforce.
- Promoting cultural appreciation and inclusivity so that students see their heritage as a strength, not a barrier.
- Ensuring that every child, regardless of background, has access to high-quality bilingual education that enhances cognitive and social skills.

2. Practically speaking, what would you do for McAllen ISD's Dual Language Program if elected?

If elected, I promise to work with stakeholders, including PUEDE, on developing strategies to strengthen and/or expand the dual language program, and advocating to the district administration to consider adoption of such strategies.

I sincerely appreciate the conversation, information provided, and most importantly your passion on this important subject. Please do not hesitate to reach out anytime, I am at your service.

Sincerely,

Roberto Haddad - Candidate for McAllen ISD School Board, Place 7

Tiffany Ramos

My vision is to implement the dual language program in as many schools as possible, as I consider it an essential program. My little brother participates in the dual language program at Pablo Perez Elementary School. As a first-generation American, and given the demographics of the Rio Grande Valley, I firmly believe it is essential to teach our children Spanish. Proficiency in Spanish would be a valuable asset on college and job applications, providing them with a competitive edge in the job market. Nationwide, there is a growing demand for bilingual applicants, as Spanish has become an integral part of American culture. I strongly believe that the dual language program is essential and would greatly benefit our children if it were to continue through all grade levels. My commitment to the dual language program is to protect and expand it to all grade levels.

Thank you,

Tiffany Ramos - Candidate for McAllen ISD School Board, Place 7