



Brownsville Independent School District

Agenda Category: Conference Presentation Board of Education Meeting: 03/04/26

Item Title: <u>2025-2026 Texas Association for Literacy & Adult Education (TALAE) Awards</u>	<u>X</u>	Action Information Discussion
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BACKGROUND:

The Texas Association for Literacy & Adult Education (TALAE) selected to award three students from Brownsville ISD Adult Continuing Education Department.

- I. Student Maria Lerma was awarded the 2025-2026 English Language Adult Learner of the Year and a \$600 check.
- II. Student Lizbeth A Gonzalez was awarded the 2025-2026 High School Equivalency Learner of the Year and a \$600 check.
- III. Student Miriam Valverde Martinez was awarded the 2025-2026 Career Pathways Adult Learner of the Year and a \$600 check.

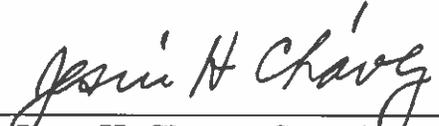
Students were recognized and awarded on Friday, February 13, 2026 during the Annual TALAE Professional Development and Training Conference that was held in Austin, Texas.

Reyes R. Rivera 
 Submitted by: Principal/Program Director

Approved for Submission to Board of Education:

Recommended by: Asst. Supt./Exec. Dir.

Dr. Nellie Cantu 
 Approved by: Chief Officer 2/18/2026


 Dr. Jesus H. Chavez, Superintendent

2026 High School Equivalency Learner of the Year Award

Nomination Letter for Lizbeth Arid Gonzalez

Academic Skill Level

Lizbeth Gonzalez is a student who wants to have a better life for her and her family. Lizbeth became a student with BISD Adult Continuing Education in September 2025 and earned her High School Equivalency certificate in October 2025. At the same time, she started the Certified Nurse Assistant program with Texas Southmost College. Lizbeth is currently completing her program and has complied with all of the regulations of both programs.

Perseverance and Dedication:

Lizbeth has shown perseverance and dedication. During Orientation, as I explained the program, she knew that it would be a great opportunity for her to accomplish her goals, that she had started many moons ago. She has been consistent with her attendance, has prepared, and has taken tests, as instructed to do so. As a result, Lizbeth earned her HHSE certificate on October 2025.

Overcoming Barriers/ Personal Growth:

Lizbeth had her 1st baby at age 16, in 2016. She kept attending school, but then she came out pregnant with her 2nd baby, in 2017. Well, this time she had no childcare and so she had to quit her school. She became a stay home mother. This led to her 3rd baby in 2019. She had some family support, but still wasn't enough for her to finish her school. She was severely struggling and did not want to depend on welfare, so she started working at Parra Furniture. She did many jobs, but after seeing her paycheck and knowing she was still struggling, she decided to go back to school, so she did!

Leadership & Community Impact:

Lizbeth attends church on occasions, complies with the community's regulations and is working hard to become a productive citizen. Lizbeth started the Texas Southmost College Certified Nursing Program, where she had proven herself worthy of doing her clinicals at South Texas Rehab Hospital. She has shown leadership by her attendance and dedication to her program. She has helped other classmates with difficult problems or situations. Lizbeth is a person that will show you kindness and guide you to do a good and appropriate decision.

Future Goals and Aspirations:

Lizbeth is a self-motivated student that she knows she has to work hard to make ends meet; therefore; she decided to get a firework stand for two weeks. This will allow her to receive some income for the holidays. Lizbeth has also been very thoughtful enough to offer employment to her fellow classmates. She states that it will help her with the workload, plus her classmates will earn a couple of dollars, since they have no job.

Why she should be awarded Career Pathways Adult Learner of the Year:

I strongly feel that Lizbeth should be awarded Career Pathway Adult Learner of the Year because she came in with a mindset of what she wanted. She has worked hard, taken chances, doubted herself many times, but has managed to accomplish her goals. As a teacher, I motivated her to do her best She followed my directives, and added her two cents in which she is so happy she did. Lizbeth is planning to either continue with school, complete her PCT, or work at a hospital. Although her ultimate goal is to go to school for her Registered Nurse certification. Whatever goal she sets for herself, I am more than sure that she will accomplish that and much more!! Super proud of your hard work, Lizbeth.

November 11, 2025

Dear Nomination Committee,

It is my pleasure to recommend Maria Esther Lerma for the 2026 TALAE English Language Learner Adult Learner of the Year Award. I have had the pleasure of working with her as her ESL Instructor at BISD – Adult Continuing Education department for the past three years. During this time, I have witnessed remarkable dedication, resilience, and growth personally, professionally and academically.

When Maria Esther joined our program, her goals were to learn English so she could become a U. S. citizen and get a job. Throughout the years in my class, she has faced significant challenges— her husband’s illness which eventually led to his death, having to support herself after her husband’s death and having to find a job with her language barriers. Despite these obstacles, she demonstrated unwavering determination to pursue her goals and improve both personal and professional opportunities. She has maintained good attendance, actively participated in class discussions, and consistently encouraged peers to persevere and believe in their own abilities to reach their goals. One of the most inspiring examples of Maria Esther’s commitment was when she finally became a U. S. Citizen in 2025. This achievement is an example of her perseverance and belief in herself.

In addition to her academics, Maria Esther is a very kind and caring person. She regularly volunteers when needed, helps her classmates, and actively participates in group projects. She is a reliable, independent, excellent team-player, and trustworthy student who supports others in and out of the classroom.

I highly recommend Maria Esther Lerma for the 2026 TALAE English Language Lerner Adult Learner of the Year Award as she is a good example of someone who has proven that with hard work and perseverance you can achieve your goals.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Marks
ESL Instructor
Brownsville Adult Continuing Education

2026 Career Pathways Adult Learner of the Year Nomination

Nominee: Miriam Martinez

Program: BISD – Adult Continuing Education

To the Selection Committee:

It is with great pride and conviction that I nominate **Miriam Martinez** for the **2026 Career Pathways Adult Learner of the Year Award**. Miriam's journey exemplifies academic excellence, personal resilience, leadership, and a profound commitment to transforming her life and the lives of those around her.

Academic and Skill Achievement

Miriam began her educational journey with BISD Adult Continuing Education in 2015, enrolling in ESL classes with limited English proficiency and very little prior academic or work experience. Despite early frustrations—she often joked that the English language “made her want to pull her hair out”—she persisted, recognizing that education was her stepping stone to a better future. Her dedication quickly became evident as she transitioned from ESL to GED preparation. In October 2017, her hard work paid off: **she successfully earned her GED**, marking her first significant educational milestone in the United States.

Demonstrated Growth in Academic Studies

Miriam's academic transformation continued as she set her sights on college. Even when she initially failed the Texas Southmost College entrance exam, she refused to accept defeat. Instead, she redoubled her efforts, studied diligently, and passed the exam on her second attempt. By 2018, she had completed the prerequisites for Texas Southmost College's competitive LVN program, and in 2019, she graduated **with Honors**, earning a **3.75 GPA**. Her academic journey, from ESL beginner to honors graduate, demonstrates remarkable growth, discipline, and intellectual maturity.

Persistence, Dedication, and Overcoming Barriers

Miriam's path has been far from easy. Growing up in “el barrio” of Matamoros, Tamaulipas, and later navigating an “undefined” immigration status, she faced uncertainty and limited opportunities. She also balanced family responsibilities and personal stressors that would have discouraged many adult learners. Yet Miriam pressed forward with unwavering resolve, fueled by an unshakable desire to build a secure future for herself and her children. Her story is a testament to resilience: even when the odds said “stop,” Miriam chose to push harder, study longer, and believe in herself.

Leadership and Community Impact

Over the past four years, Miriam has worked as a Licensed Vocational Nurse in both short- and long-term care settings, including wound care. She has also served as **Assistant Director of Nurses at Altavista Rehabilitation Center** and has broadened her experience through clinical

rotations with Valley Baptist Medical Center. Her leadership is rooted not just in technical skill but in compassion, professionalism, and a sincere dedication to helping others.

Her positive influence extends beyond the workplace. Miriam inspires peers, family, and fellow adult learners through her story and encouragement. As she often shares, “There is always that one teacher who plants a seed and reminds you how valuable you are.” Now, she is that person for others—a living example of perseverance and self-belief.

Future Goals and Aspirations

Miriam’s journey is far from over. She continues to pursue advanced clinical experience and remains committed to expanding her education and professional credentials in the healthcare field. Motivated by her children and anchored by the support of her family and friends—whom she calls her “rock”—she looks forward with faith, purpose, and the certainty that God will continue guiding her. Her goals are realistic, meaningful, and aligned with her proven ability to overcome challenges and succeed.

Conclusion

Miriam Martinez embodies everything this award celebrates: academic growth, persistence in the face of adversity, inspirational leadership, and a clear vision for her future. She proves every day that with determination, commitment, and heart, an adult learner can redefine their life’s trajectory and uplift an entire community along the way.

For these reasons and many more, I wholeheartedly recommend **Miriam Martinez** for the **2025 Career Pathways Adult Learner of the Year Award**.