



# Proposed Expansion of Brillante Academy – Considerations for Local Communities

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# Purpose and Process

- **Purpose:** The material herein has been compiled to educate the Hidalgo County community regarding the State's potential approval of Brillante Academy, a privately operated charter requesting to locate in McAllen ISD.
- **“Charters”** are privately managed organizations that are approved by the State to simultaneously operate taxpayer funded schools inside school districts.
- **Approval Process:** The Texas Education Agency (“TEA”) coordinates the approval process for new privately managed charters.
- **Lack of Community Involvement:** Although local school districts and communities are directly impacted, the State's approval process does not seek input from local parents, taxpayers and stakeholders.

# Summary: Brillante Academy Charter Application

## ▪ **There is Not a Need for an Additional Charter in Hidalgo County:**

- ✓ All school districts in Hidalgo County have State academic ratings of “A” or “B”
- ✓ McAllen ISD is one of the TOP 10 highest performing public-school systems in Texas with an academic rating of “A” (93)
- ✓ McAllen ISD has ZERO low performing campuses

## ▪ **Families Have Many Existing Charter Options:**

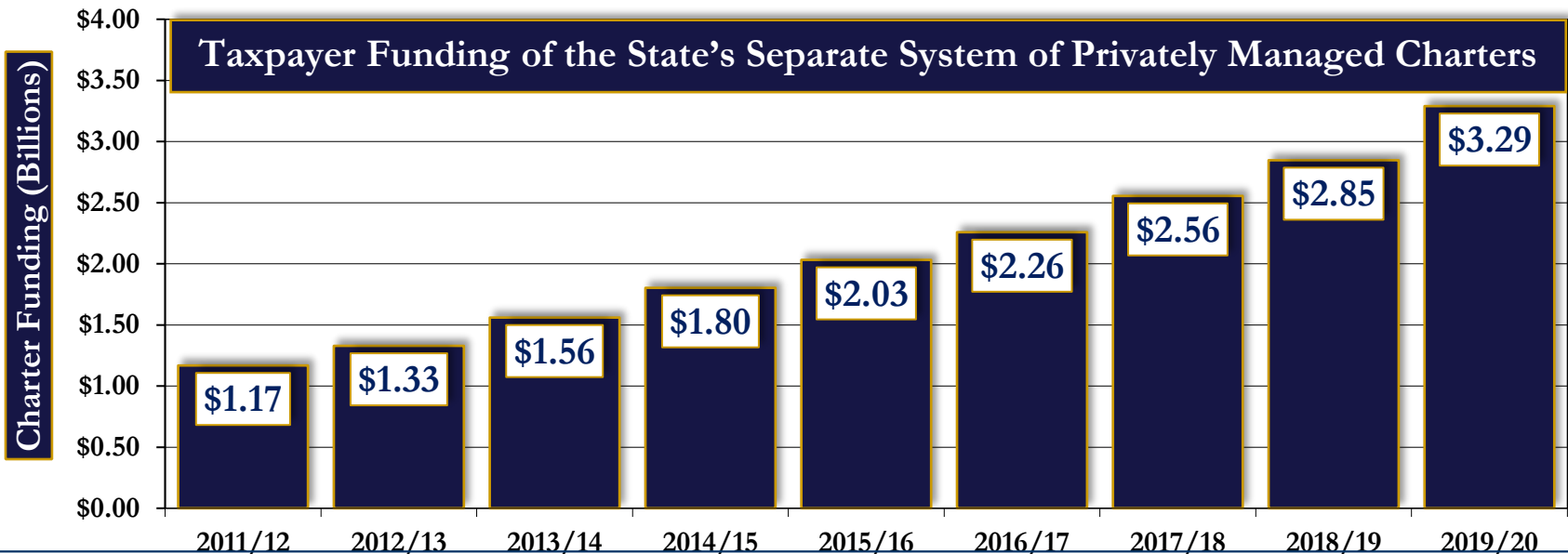
- ✓ 23 existing charter campuses are located within 8 miles of the proposed Brillante Academy
- ✓ 22,068 students are currently enrolled at charters within targeted school districts in Hidalgo County, including 3,094 students residing in McAllen ISD
- ✓ 2 new charter campuses opened in proximity in 2019/20 and will be adding grades in future

## ▪ **Potential Concerns of Brillante Academy Model:**

- ✓ Seton Education Partners and Brillante Academy are heavily aligned to the “catholic faith”, including targeted enrollment from St. Joseph the Worker, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, and San Juan Diego Parishes
- ✓ Brillante is a start-up with an unproven education model and most “classical and multiple language charter models” in Texas that enroll a high percentage of economically disadvantaged students are low performing with ratings of “D” or “F”

# Funding the State's Separate System of Charters

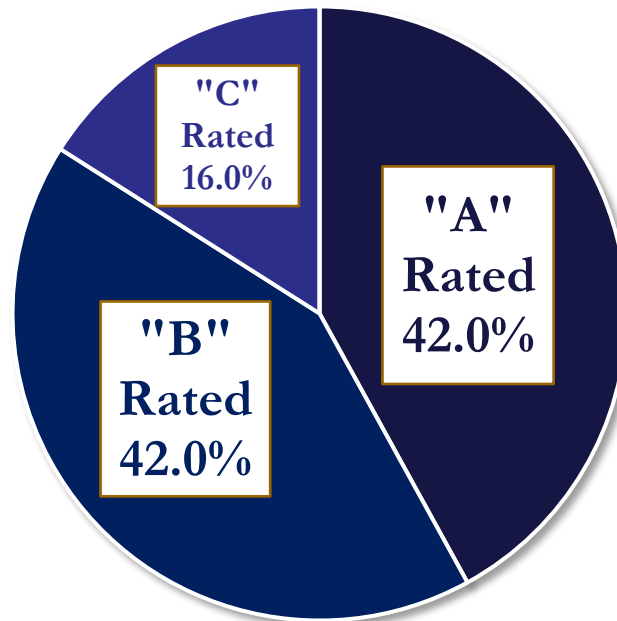
- **Charter Funding Process:** The State funds its separate system of charters by recapturing taxpayer funding from locally governed school districts and redistributing it to the privately managed charters it has approved.
- **Annual Charter Funding:** In 2019/20, charters were provided \$3.2 billion of taxpayer funding. As a result, the funding of every school district in Hidalgo County was reduced.
- **Brillante Funding:** Brillante is estimated to reduce the annual funding of Hidalgo County school districts by over \$38 million over next 10 years.



# McAllen ISD: District and Campus Ratings

- **McAllen ISD has a State academic accountability rating of “A” (93), ranking it as one of the Top 10 highest rated public-school systems in Texas.**
- **McAllen ISD has ZERO low performing campuses: 84% are rated “A” or “B” and the lowest rated campus is a “C” (76).**

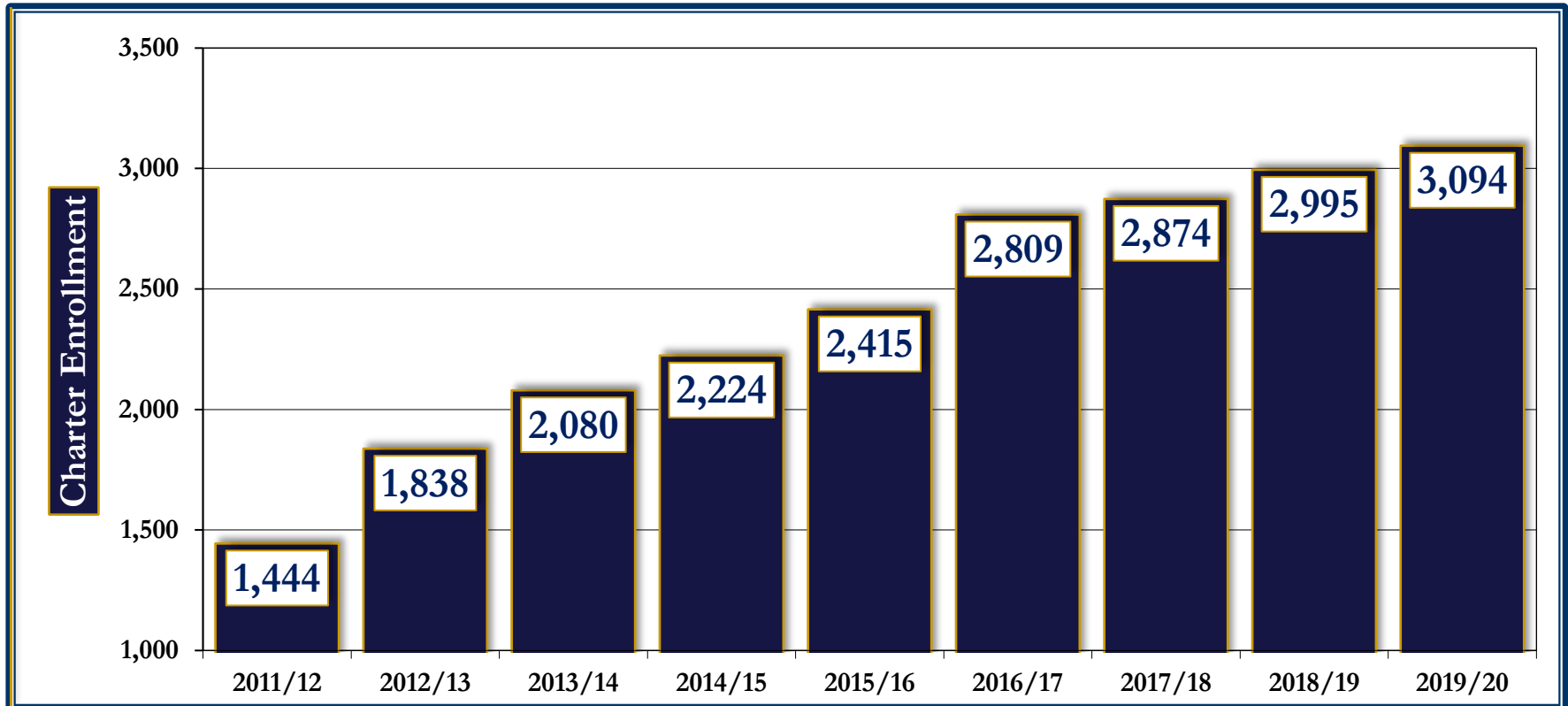
McAllen ISD: Campus Academic Ratings



# McAllen ISD: Historical Charter Enrollment

Despite McAllen ISD's high academic performance, the number of students attending State approved charters has increased by 114% over the last 8 years, from 1,444 student to 3,094 students in 2019/20.

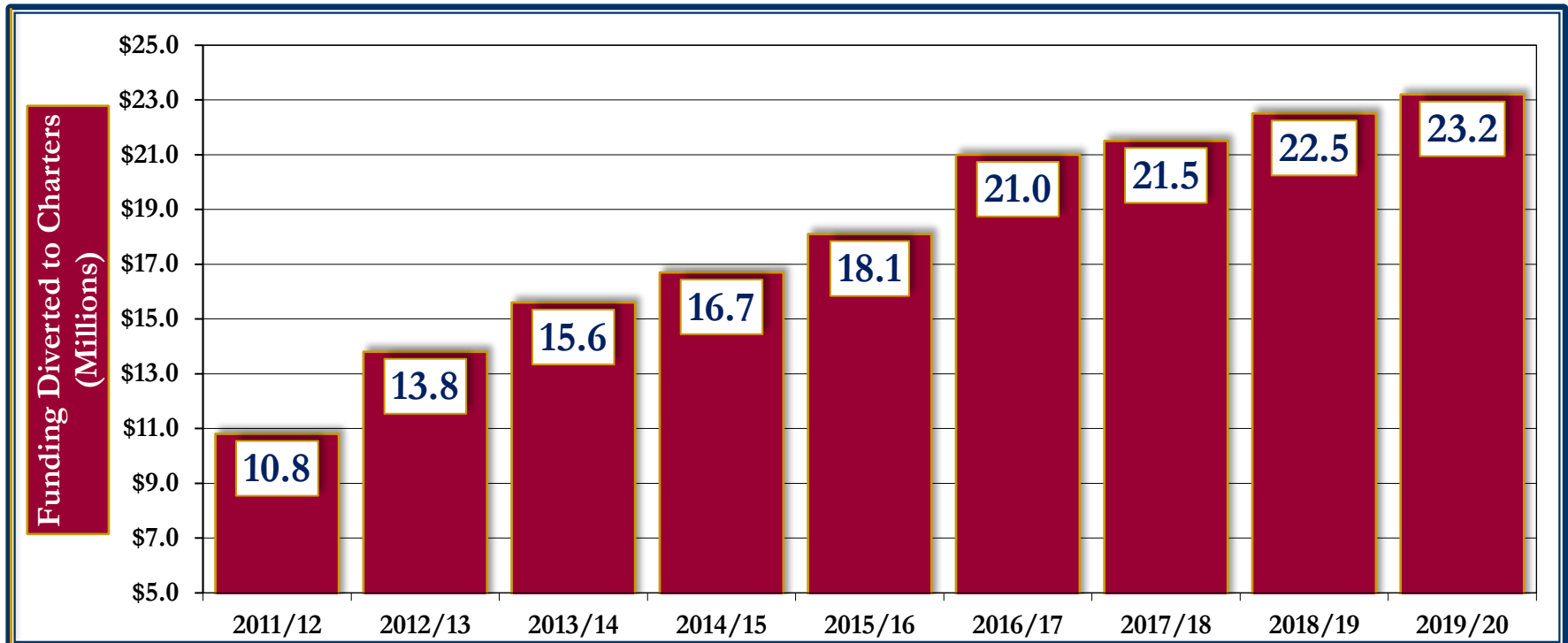
## McAllen ISD: Historical Charter Enrollment



# McAllen ISD: Funding Diverted to State Approved Charters

Due to the expansion of privately managed charters, an estimated \$163.2 million of taxpayer funding has been diverted from McAllen ISD to State approved charters over the last 9 years.

## McAllen ISD: Estimated Funding Diverted to State Approved Charters



# Existing State Approved Charter Campuses

- There are currently 23 charter campuses located within 8 miles of McAllen.
- This includes 2 IDEA campuses that recently opened and will be expanding to serve grades 3-5 in upcoming years.

## 23 Charter Campuses Within 8 Miles of McAllen ISD





# Charter Presence in Targeted School Districts

Despite the solid academic ratings of locally governed school districts in Hidalgo County, 22,068 students currently attend State approved charters.

School District	State Academic Rating	Existing Charter Enrollment	Total Enrolment	Percentage: Charter Enrollment
McAllen ISD	93	3,094	22,802	13.6%
Mission CISD	88	1,997	15,577	12.8%
Sharyland ISD	93	944	10,258	9.2%
Edinburg CISD	89	4,415	34,066	13.0%
Pharr-San Juan-Alamo ISD	87	5,475	32,677	16.8%
Donna ISD	85	3,705	14,439	25.7%
Hidalgo ISD	89	219	3,250	6.7%
La Joya ISD	88	2,219	27,998	7.9%
<b>Total</b>	--	<b>22,068</b>	<b>161,067</b>	<b>13.7%</b>

# Seton Education Partners: Overview

- Seton Education Partners (“Seton”), located in New York, is the Charter Management Organization (“CMO”) for Brillante Academy.
- Seton will receive 8% of Brillante Academy’s taxpayer funding per year as a charter “management fee”.
- **Seton’s Charter School Initiative** was formed in response to the shuttering of 60+ Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of New York. Seton set out to launch a secular charter school model of virtue paired with optional, privately funded Catholic faith formation after school.
- **A Guiding Principle:** A tremendous opportunity exists with both technology and public charter schooling to develop new, “break the mold” approaches to achieving the goals of urban Catholic education, making it a competitive, viable, and thriving option for Catholics and non-Catholics alike.
- Seton currently operates 2 charter campuses in New York that enroll 776 students:
  - Brilla College Prep Charter School – Opened in 2013: 525 Students
  - Brilla College Prep Veritas Charter School – Opened in 2017: 251 Students

# Seton Education Partners: Principles

- **Seton Education Partners - Principles:**

- ✓ **Results:** All initiatives have a strong emphasis on student achievement, as well as on character development, with results that are far superior to most urban public schools.
- ✓ **Sustainability:** All initiatives must be on a steady course to financial sustainability via public funds, tuition, church contributions, and/or philanthropy.
- ✓ **Catholicity:** All initiatives must have as a core mission demonstrating and teaching the Catholic faith.
- ✓ **Service to the Poor:** All initiatives must be primarily focused on serving children who qualify for the federal free and reduced-lunch program, a standard measure for students living in poverty.

# Brillante Academy: Overview

- Brillante Academy is a new network of PK-8 charter schools to be managed by Seton.
- **Education Model:**
  - Classical Education
  - Two-way, Dual Language Immersion
  - Focus on the Best Content - Great Minds (Eureka Math and Wit and Wisdom) and Core Knowledge
  - Parent Involvement
  - Lead with Character
- **Initial location:** Within McAllen ISD at the St. Joseph the Worker Church.
- **Targeted Neighborhoods:** South central McAllen near **St. Joseph the Worker Parish**, downtown McAllen, central McAllen near **Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish**, the Las Palmas Historic District, and south McAllen near **San Juan Diego Parish**.
- **Targeted Elementary Schools:** **Thigpen-Zavala, Escandon, and Wilson**

# Brillante Academy: Team Members and Advocates

- **Aaron Brenner – Superintendent:** General Partner, Chief of New Charter School Growth at Seton Education Partners. McAllen resident, former TFA teacher and KIPP Administrator.
- **Daniel West - Board President:** Associate, SCF Partners in Houston. Personal friends with 2 Board members of Seton Education Partners.
- **Maggie Barriero – Board Member:** Associate Professor of Nursing, UTRGV BSN Nursing Program. **Motivation to Serve on Charter Board:** “I am active in our parish – St. Joseph the Worker Community...I feel that children are lacking a strong foundation in religion belief ever since it was removed from public education”.
- **Jose Villalobos – Board Member:** Managing Partner, McAllen Valley Roofing Co. **Treasurer, Catholic Christian Family Movement (MFCC) that promotes Catholic human and Christian values in families.**
- **John Escamilla – Board Member:** Owner, Escamilla Law Firm, PLLC.
- **Father Edouard Atangana – Advisor:** Parish Leader, St. Joseph the Worker Catholic Parish. *“Decisions about the School's location and targeted student community were greatly impacted by Father Edouard Atangana, a community advocate. His insights and feedback greatly influenced planning, including the model and location”.*

# Summary: Targeted Elementary Campuses

- The 3 McAllen ISD elementary campuses targeted for enrollment are located between 0.2 – 1.9 miles from the proposed Brillante Academy.
- 2 campuses have ratings of “B” (82 and 84) and earned academic distinctions as shown below.
- Escandon Elementary is rated a “C” (76) and 22.6% of students receive SPED services.

## Summary of McAllen ISD Campuses Targeted for Enrollment

McAllen ISD Targeted Campus	State Academic Rating	Economically - Disadvantaged	At Risk	ELL	Special Education
Thigpen-Zavala Elementary	82	95.1%	79.2%	66.0%	10.9%
Escandon Elementary	76	85.6%	66.6%	52.4%	22.6%
Wilson Elementary	84	91.9%	68.6%	55.6%	10.9%

## Targeted McAllen ISD Campuses – Summary of 2019 Distinctions

McAllen ISD - Targeted Campus	Distinction	Distinction	Distinction
Thigpen-Zavala Elementary	Science	Comparative Closing the Gaps	--
Wilson Elementary	ELA/Reading	Science	Comparative Academic Growth

# Concern: Many Multiple Language Charter Models are Low-Performing

- **Charter elementary campuses providing a multiple language models have been some of the lowest performing schools in Texas:**
  - Both of KIPP’s innovative, “Dual Language Academies” in San Antonio have State academic ratings of “F” with scores of 46 and 54; and
  - 5 K-5 campuses of IL Texas are rated “D” or “F”.

## Multiple Language Charter Campuses - State Academic Ratings

Charter Multiple Language Elementary Campus	Grades Served	State Academic Rating: 2019
KIPP Esperanza Dual Language Academy	K - 4	F (46)
KIPP Un Mundo Dual Language Academy	K - 4	F (54)
IL Texas – Houston Orem Elementary	K - 5	F (45)
IL Texas – Arlington Elementary	K - 5	D (63)
IL Texas – Lancaster Elementary	K - 5	D (64)
IL Texas – North Richland Elementary	K - 5	D (69)
IL Texas – East Fort Worth Elementary	K - 5	D (69)

# Concern: Classical Model Has Produced Low Outcomes for Eco. Disad. Students

The “classical charter academies” in Texas that are listed below serve over 50% economically-disadvantaged students:

- 3 of 4 have been rated “D”, “F” in the last 2 years;
- Only 1 has achieved a “B” rating; and
- Currently, 1 has closed, 2 are rated “D” and 1 is rated “B”.

## Classical Academies - Over 50% Economically Disadvantaged Students: Historical State Academic Ratings

Classical Academy	Economically Disadvantaged	2019	2018
Founders Classical Academy - Mesquite	83%	D	C
Founders Classical Academy - Dallas	86%	Closed	F
Clay Classical	84%	B	B
Pasadena Classical	65%	D	C



# Disclosures: It's Your Students, Schools, Tax Dollars and Community

*This material was prepared by William J. Gumbert, a voluntary advocate for public education. The material was assembled to provide communities in Hidalgo County with information relating to the proposed expansion of Brillante Academy to help them determine the most appropriate public education system for their communities. No compensation has been provided for the preparation of this material. The contents herein are based upon information provided by Brillante Academy's charter application, Texas Education Agency, Txschools.gov, New York Department of Education, Seton Education Partners website, and other publicly available information. While the author believes these sources to be reliable, the author has not independently verified the information.*

*The opinions expressed herein are solely the opinions of the author. All readers are encouraged to complete their own review of Brillante Academy's application and make their own independent conclusions.*