

Memorandum of Understanding

Brownsville Independent School District *and* The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

The following Memorandum of Understanding (hereafter the MOU), establishes a relationship between the Brownsville Independent School District (hereafter BISD), and The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (hereafter UTRGV) and sets forth the terms of collaboration between said entities to bring to Brownsville the Kids Voting USA (hereafter KV) curriculum. This MOU between BISD and UTRGV will be in effect until such time as it is terminated. Either party may terminate this MOU upon thirty (30) days written notice to the other party for any reason. If the termination is for cause, i.e. a material and significant breach of any of the provisions of the agreement, such termination may take place immediately upon written notice to the other party.

I. PROGRAM AND CURRICULUM DESCRIPTION

Kids Voting USA is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, nonsectarian organization. The focus of KV is to teach young people, Kindergarten through Twelfth Grade, the basics of responsible citizenship in a free society. This is carried out through lessons that encourage the learner to know the issues, know the candidates, know why we vote, to vote, and to hold the elected official accountable. KV provides materials and activities for each grade level. It is unique because it combines dynamic classroom teaching with an authentic voting experience, as appropriate to individual grade levels.

In the year 2000 national election cycle, Dr. Sandy McGehee, Educational Service Director at The Brownsville Herald, brought the national program, Kids Voting USA (KVUSA) to BISD schools. The great success of Dr. McGehee's enterprise prompted Armand Mathew, OMI, then director of the UTB/TSC Center for Civic Engagement (CCE), to begin the effort to bring KVUSA to all the schools of Brownsville on a permanent basis. In 2003, he submitted CCE's application to become an official affiliate of KVUSA with great support of the community. Once the application was accepted, CCE moved immediately to form a partnership with the Brownsville Independent School District (BISD) with the help of then Assistant Superintendent Ms. Mary Jo Monfils. The private schools, including home schooling, soon joined the partnership. Thus, KVUSA-B was born. In November 2005, the Brownsville City Commission proclaimed the Thursday before the first Monday in November as Kids Voting USA/Brownsville Day. In the past ten years, over 300,000 students have participated in Kids Voting USA-Brownsville. Table 1 presents a description of the students' participation from 2004-2014.

Number of Elections	Average Voters per Election	Average Potential Voters	Average Percentage Voter Turnout	Total Number of Voters
10	33,611	49,424	68.46%	336,106

Table 1. KV Student Participation 2004-2014

II. GENERAL PROVISIONS

- The BISD schools will provide the teaching and implementation of the KV curriculum, with support of UTRGV, as a supplement to the teaching of the Social Studies Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS).
- UTRGV and BISD will host official KV events as agreed upon by both parties in advance, with costs to be borne as agreed upon by the parties. Official events may include, but are not limited to, voting, voter rallies, student leadership development, yearly KV workshops, student council sessions, and Masterminds Competition.
- Annually scheduled KV events will be in BISD's yearly calendar.
- Each party to this MOU will conduct itself in accord with the laws, policies, and guiding principles of its own institution. Nothing in this agreement is intended to negate, diminish or otherwise render ineffective any such laws, policies, or guiding principles.
- If at any time either party is unable to perform its functions under this agreement in accord with such party's statutory and regulatory mandates, the affected party shall immediately provide written notice to the other to establish a date for mutual resolution of the conflict.

III. SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITIES

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley agrees to:

- Remain an affiliate of "KV USA" and continue KV program implementation.
- Assist in data collection and data reporting on collaborative events.
- Assume leadership in implementation of specific initiatives in the areas of curriculum and related activities, training and mentoring, and communication.

Curriculum and activities

- Provide campuses and the BISD Social Studies Curriculum Specialists with activities and ideas to implement the KV curriculum to complement the BISD and state-mandated curricula.
- Provide campuses, BISD Social Studies Curriculum Specialists and the BISD Campus Liaisons with ideas for observing KV Day, the Thursday before November elections.
- Coordinate authentic voter experiences and other activities as suggested by the KV curriculum at appropriate grade levels in the Fall.
- Coordinate voting-related activities (such as art and multi-media contests) every Spring.

Training and mentoring

- Coordinate a yearly KV workshop for BISD elementary, middle school, and high school teachers.
- Coordinate the participation of BISD student organizations and their advisors in a KV mentoring session with UTRGV student leadership organizations.
- Coordinate ongoing mentoring between UTRGV student representatives and BISD student organizations and their advisors to integrate KV concepts and procedures.

Communication

- Keep in regular contact with KV USA to stay abreast of new developments.
- Establish and maintain BISD campus alliances and stay in regular communication with the BISD Social Studies Curriculum Specialists and BISD Campus Liaisons.

The Brownsville Independent School District agrees to:

- Implement KV USA program in all BISD schools.
- Assist in continual data collection and data reporting on collaborative events.
- Assume leadership in implementation of specific initiatives in the areas of curriculum and related activities, training and mentoring, and communication.
- Pay the affiliate fee for Kids Voting USA and contribute to the Kids Voting USA-Brownsville budget as is feasible.

Curriculum and activities

- Include the participation of all BISD schools in official KV events/activities, agreed upon by BISD.
- Access the KV curriculum in all BISD classrooms on an on-going basis to complement the K-12 Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills and other BISD curricula.
- Conduct authentic voter experiences and other activities as suggested by the KV curriculum at appropriate grade levels in the Fall.
- Participate in voting related activities (such as art and multi-media contests) every Spring.
- Screen all guest speakers on the democratic process for classroom presentations to ensure they do not endorse any candidate or party and are not seeking office. All guest speakers are to be cleared via the BISD volunteer process through the BISD Human Resources Office.
- Recognize accomplishments of BISD KV program activities at BISD School Board meetings.

Training and mentoring

- Include the participation of BISD teachers in official teacher training for the implementation of the KV Curriculum.
- Provide a pathway for UTRGV representatives (including students) to be screened through the Human Resources volunteer process prior to working with BISD students.
- Include the participation of BISD student organizations and their advisors in KV mentoring sessions with UTRGV student leadership organizations.

Communication

- Designate the BISD Social Studies Curriculum Specialists as the BISD KV district contacts, who, with the BISD Campus Liaisons, will maintain communication with UTRGV and BISD schools regarding KV.
- Keep UTRGV informed on a regular basis of what BISD teachers and administrators are doing related to KV events.
- Stay informed of “KV USA” developments by checking the “KV USA” website.

IV. AMENDMENT OF MOU

This MOU may be amended at any time in writing and by mutual consent of the parties.

On the ____ day of _____, 2015, the undersigned parties bind themselves to the faithful adherence to and full implementation of the provisions in this Memorandum of Understanding.

Dr. Guy Bailey, President,
University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

Ms. Minerva M. Peña, President,
Board of Trustees,
Brownsville Independent School District

Dr. Havidan Rodriguez, Provost,
University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

Dr. Esperanza Zendejas,
Interim Superintendent of Schools,
Brownsville Independent Scholl District