HISD educator named Texas Poet Laureate

June 23, 2021 – A Houston Independent School District educator has been named Texas Poet Laureate.

Lupe Mendez is an HISD teacher development specialist with more than ten years of experience with the district. The former classroom teacher has also received fellowships from CantoMundo, Macondo and the Crescendo Literary/Poetry Foundation.


“Lupe is a remarkably talented individual who is deserving of this high honor,” HISD Interim Superintendent Grenita Lathan said. “His life experience, artistic talents, and intellectual abilities make our school district a better place for our staff, students, and parents.”

Mendez works with emerging writers of color who reflect the diversity of local Texas communities. Additionally, he has been a performance poet for nearly 20 years.

“I am elated to be selected for such a distinct honor,” Mendez said. "It is a time for celebration and a time to serve as a model writer, poet and artist to fit the needs of the time, the movement and the people of Texas."

Mendez’s latest collection, Why I am Like Tequila won the 2019 John A. Robertson Award for Best First Book of Poetry.

The Texas Legislature recently announced the poet laureate appointment. Mendez will serve his one-year term in 2022.