

HISD PRESS RELEASE

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.

Mendez is an internationally published writer. His work is featured in *The Kenyon Review*, *Gulf Coast Journal*, the *Texas Review*, *Poetry Magazine* and *Poem-A-Day* from the Academy of American Poets.

“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.

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The Houston Independent School District is the largest school district in Texas and the seventh-largest in the United States, with 280 schools and more than 209,772 students. The 333-square-mile district is one of the largest employers in the Houston metropolitan area, with more than 27,000 employees.

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