

HISD PRESS RELEASE

First Indian American tapped to lead Office of Communications in district history

July 11, 2022 – Effective today, Tejal Patel will serve as Executive Officer of Communications for the Houston Independent School District.

Patel is the first Indian American to lead the district's communications department in the nearly 100-year history of HISD.

"I am confident Tejal Patel will be outstanding as the Executive Officer of Communications.," said Superintendent Millard House II. "She brings a breadth of experience to her new role, and I am pleased to be a part of this historic moment. As I have said many times before, it is vital that our leadership team reflects the diversity of our school district and our broader community."

Patel will report directly to Chief Engagement Officer Max Moll.

Patel will be tasked with conveying Superintendent House's five-year strategic plan to the various HISD internal and external stakeholders through a multipronged approach. As Executive Officer of Communications, she will oversee media relations, strategic communications, multimedia, translations, and the newly created digital media department.



"As we work to reimagine how we engage with HISD families, stakeholders, and the community at-large, I am excited to have Tejal in this role. The breadth of her experience, leadership skills,

and commitment to her work will be instrumental in improving the district's communications," said Max Moll, Chief of Engagement.

"I am thrilled to take on this new role and ensure our communications are a two-way conversation between HISD, its families, and our various communities. Transparency and trust are key to building that foundation," said Patel. "I look forward to the opportunity to share how Superintendent House's strategic plan charts the path forward for HISD to become the school district that provides its students with the outstanding educational opportunities that they need and deserve."


Patel is a first-generation American, native Texan, and the first in her family to graduate from college. Over the course of her nearly 20-year career in journalism and communications, she has built a reputation as a trusted spokesperson and expert in storytelling and narrative building. Before joining HISD in March 2021 as the General Manager of Media Relations, she served as the Deputy Press Secretary for Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner. During her tenure in that role, Patel shepherded messaging around the "Stay Home, Work Safe" Order, mask mandates and COVID-19 testing during the pandemic in 2020 to rolling out vaccination opportunities and the winter freeze in 2021. She played a key role in increasing trust between media outlets and the Mayor's Office of Communications.


She previously served as spokesperson for the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services and community outreach coordinator for Houston Community College. As an award-winning journalist, she spent nearly 10 years in TV newsrooms as a news producer in Waco, Albuquerque, Houston, and Dallas covering major news events such as wildfires in New Mexico, the 2009 mass shooting at Fort Hood, and the 2013 fertilizer plant explosion in the town of West, TX.

Patel has volunteered with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Houston, Girls Empowerment Network, Barbara Bush Literacy Foundation, Make-a-Wish Foundation, and served on the Houston2036 Taskforce.


Patel is a proud Alief ISD alum who graduated from the University of Texas at Austin with a Bachelor of Journalism.

The Houston Independent School District is the largest school district in Texas and the eighth-largest in the United States, with 276 schools and nearly 197,000 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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