

Dear Editor,

Maplewood Elementary has the diversity profile of a perfect Sesame Street school. With 50% children of color, 34% economically disadvantaged children, 14% special education enrollment, a dual-language program, and children of refugee families, Maplewood is one of the most diverse schools in the district. In addition, Maplewood has been an Anti-Defamation League “No Place for Hate” campus since 2013.

With 140% enrollment, Maplewood runs counter to Austin's declining public-school enrollment. With creative and relevant special initiatives, a wide variety of grants, ecological and gardening programs that take the kids outside, “Peace Fests” every nine weeks, innovative community-partnered arts programs, a high walkability score, robust community involvement, a rocking PTA, and dedicated staff, Maplewood is a model of what a school can and should be.

For several years Maplewood has been awarded the Mayor’s Healthiest School Award, and this year was the only AISD school at the elementary level to score in the top three, earning a \$1,000 grant.

The popular Cherrywood Art Fair sprang from Maplewood and is still held there. The highly respected Chula League Big Artist, Little Artist program is a spin-off of the special synergy of Maplewood Elementary and its neighborhood.

Maplewood’s many accomplishments and strengths are a result of the hard work and dedication of our students, educators, volunteers, and generous community that has supported it even when AISD resources were scarce.

Shouldn’t AISD be studying how Maplewood has become such a successful school rather than closing it down? Doesn't it make more sense for AISD to support this flourishing school, learn from it, and utilize the lessons learned to vitalize other schools in the district?

Iumi Richard-Crow