



Maplewood Elementary Solar Science Lab Project

Maplewood Elementary School, the first school in Austin to install solar panels, embarks on its most ambitious “green” project to date: the building of a Solar Science Lab. The Lab will further Maplewood’s goal of increasing the opportunity of its students, and students from other East Austin schools, to engage in “hands-on” science lessons, while also serving as a demonstration project for environmentally-friendly construction. Dr. Pauline Walker, kindergarten teacher at Maplewood and facilitator of Maplewood’s Robotics and Young Einstein’s clubs, wants to give students early exposure to science and technology and address the under-representation of female students, minority students, and students with disabilities in the fields of science and engineering.

If Maplewood can raise sufficient funding, it will participate in the University of Texas School of Architecture’s “Design, Build, Texas,” studio program. UT undergraduate students, supervised by Associate Dean Louise Harpman, will undertake all phases of the architectural process: from discussion of the initial concept, to review and adaptation of preliminary designs, to research of zoning requirements, negotiating with contractors and suppliers, to actual construction. Students must incorporate “green” building materials, such as straw bale construction and alternative energy sources, including solar power.

The Solar Science Lab will allow UT students the unique opportunity to see a project through to completion and will provide an invaluable resource to East Austin students, many of whom go on to attend Kealing Middle School but do not participate in Kealing’s science magnet program. Capturing these students’ interest in science during the elementary years will increase the likelihood that they will choose the science magnet program when they move on to middle school.

If you would like to make a financial contribution or donate materials, please contact Dr. Pauline Walker at 841-0222 or Maryann Overath at 451-5666.