



February 10, 2025

Via Electronic Mail

Dear Dr. Maika and Members of the North East ISD Board of Trustees:

Our names are Andrew Hairston and Princess Jefferson, and we serve as attorneys on Texas Appleseed's Education Justice Project. We write in support of the NEISD Community Advocates efforts to halt the closures of three public schools in the district. For the reasons we highlight in greater detail below, we are concerned about the racially discriminatory impact of this prospective decision, the psychological harm the closures will cause children & families in San Antonio, and the lack of an equity audit in this process. Thus, we ask that the Board delay its decision to close these schools and ask that the district conduct an equity audit and readily make the ensuing data available to interested parties.

Texas Appleseed is a non-profit, non-partisan organization that uses public policy advocacy, community outreach, research, and strategic communications to advance social, racial, and economic justice for all Texans. In examining publicly available data about Clear Spring, Driscoll, and Wilshire, we first highlight the racial injustice that will be caused by this slate of school closures. With an enrollment of 62.3% Hispanic children and 13.8% Black children, it is clear that Wilshire Elementary School is a community institution that serves Black & Brown families.¹ The numbers are similar at Driscoll Middle School - with 57.9% Hispanic enrollment and 8.5% Black enrollment - and Clear Spring Elementary - with 69.8% Hispanic enrollment and 15.9% Black enrollment.² Moreover, although these ratings are based on unnecessary high stakes testing, each of these schools received, at minimum, a B rating from the state during the 2023-24 academic year. These realities strain the belief that there's any justification for the closures of these schools.

¹ *Profile of Wilshire Elementary*, [TXSchools.gov](https://txschools.gov/?view=school&id=015910116&tab=overview&lng=en), 2022, available at <https://txschools.gov/?view=school&id=015910116&tab=overview&lng=en> (last visited on February 10, 2025).

² *Profile of Driscoll Middle*, [TXSchools.gov](https://txschools.gov), 2022, available at <https://txschools.gov/?view=school&id=015910049&tab=overview&lng=en> (last visited on February 10, 2025); *see also Profile of Clear Spring Elementary*, [TXSchools.gov](https://txschools.gov), 2022, available at <https://txschools.gov/?view=school&id=015910119&tab=overview&lng=en> (last visited on February 10, 2025).



Another point that we want to uplift is that the Hispanic enrollment at these three schools, averaged out, is higher than the Hispanic enrollment of North East ISD. According to data from the 2023-24 school year, the district enrolled Hispanic students at a rate of 60.9%.³ The average of Hispanic enrollment at Clear Spring, Driscoll, and Wilshire is 63.3%.

As the NEISD Community Advocates have emphasized across this process, school closures have many significant and detrimental effects on children and their communities. The NEISD Community Advocates uplifted a June 2024 *Education Week* article on their website that refers to a critical white paper from a University of Houston researcher.⁴ School closures detrimentally impact college attendance, future wage earning potential, and the mental health of the students who face their harms. Moreover, for the past several weeks, the parent organizers and youth organizers of NEISD Community Advocates have spoken passionately before the NEISD Board of Trustees about the emotional turmoil caused by the proposed school closures.

With regard to the equity audit, we believe that AB 1912 (2022) from California is quite instructive.⁵ We laud the hard work of the ACLU of Northern California and parent organizers in Oakland that led to the California Legislature passing this critical bill.⁶ This law outlines various factors that a district should consider before proceeding with a school closure, including an evaluation of the facility, balance of pupil demographics, and special programs at the school that is proposed to be closed. The law also enshrines the principle of robust democratic engagement into the process, as the school district is required to include a final report of how it evaluated the factors and incorporated public input into its decision-making. Although North East ISD is certainly not bound by California law, we offer it as an incredibly beneficial framework to guide the district through the extremely emotional conversation of school closures.

³ *Profile of North East ISD*, [TXSchools.gov](https://txschools.gov), 2022, available at <https://txschools.gov/?view=district&id=015910&tab=overview&lng=en> (last visited on February 10, 2025).

⁴ See generally Jeonghyeok Kim, *The Long Shadow of School Closures: Impacts on Students' Educational and Labor Market Outcomes*, [Annenberg: Brown University](https://edworkingpapers.com/sites/default/files/ai24-963.pdf), April 10, 2024, available at <https://edworkingpapers.com/sites/default/files/ai24-963.pdf> (last visited on February 10, 2025).

⁵ https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=202120220AB1912 (last visited on February 10, 2025).

⁶ See generally https://www.aclunc.org/sites/default/files/2022.04.11_J4OS_Complaint_to_AG%20Bonta_re_OUSD_Closures.pdf



In conclusion, we urge you to seriously consider the grievances of the community and halt this slate of school closures. Many of the tactics that we have seen employed during this debate reflect the ways in which many other districts approach school closures, using inappropriate business principles to evaluate the performance of a school.⁷ As we contend with broader forces to destabilize & dismantle public education, it is imperative for local governmental bodies to invest significant resources into the public goods that are public schools. Rather than close schools, we recommend that you seek innovative ways to preserve budgets, such as reallocating funds from the NEISD school police budget to initiatives that actually support student success. We invite you to contact our office with any questions you may have, and we thank you for your consideration of this letter.

Respectfully submitted,

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⁷ See generally Action Kit: Stop Closing Public Schools, *Advancement Project*, 2024, https://advancementproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/AP-SchoolClosureActionKit_FINAL.pdf (last visited on February 10, 2025).