Maplewood

CANADIAN EDUCATION FOR A DIGITAL GENERATION

OCTOBER · 2026

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF MAPLEWOOD CANADIAN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL



FROM THE REGION'S FIRST GOOGLE DIGITAL CAMPUS TO THE AI-POWERED SCHOOL OF TOMORROW

CANADIAN EDUCATION

DIGITAL TODAY, AI TOMORROW

INNOVATE. INSPIRE. IMPACT.

ALBERTA CURRICULUM • KG1 TO GRADE 12 • ABU DHABI

MAPLEWOOD CANADIAN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

CREATING THE FUTURE

ALBERTA CURRICULUM • KG1 TO GRADE 12 • ABU DHABI



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Maplewood Magazine is published for the families and community of Maplewood Canadian International School, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. The school follows the Alberta Education Curriculum from KG1 to Grade 12.

Every school has a story. Ours is still being written.

THE LINE THIS ISSUE TURNS ON

A school that is Canadian in educational excellence, Emirati in spirit, international in outlook and human in its values.

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MAPLEWOOD MAGAZINE

Published for the families and community of Maplewood Canadian International School, Abu Dhabi. The school teaches the Alberta curriculum from KG1 to Grade 12.

A school is easy to describe in facts. A date. A building. A curriculum. A list of achievements. A number of students. A number of nationalities.

But none of those things really tells you what a school feels like.

For Maplewood, the story begins in 2014, when the doors first opened in Abu Dhabi. What began as a school built around the Alberta curriculum has grown into a community shaped by thousands of children, families and educators who have passed through its classrooms, corridors, playgrounds and fields.

Over the years, Maplewood has changed.

The campus has grown. New programmes have taken shape. Technology has become part of everyday learning. Classrooms have become spaces not only for teaching, but for questioning, creating, experimenting and discovering. Students have competed, performed, built, explored and found interests they may never have known they had.

And yet, some things have remained remarkably constant.

The belief that education should do more than prepare a child for the next examination. The belief that curiosity matters. That confidence can be taught. That a child should be known as an individual, not reduced to a grade, a label or a result. And that the most important measure of a school is ultimately what happens to its students.

The journey matters because the destination keeps changing.





When we look back at Maplewood's journey, it is tempting to tell the story as a sequence of milestones: one achievement followed by another, one new initiative followed by the next. But a school is not built by milestones alone.

It is built on ordinary mornings. On the teacher who stays behind to explain something one more time. On the student who finally solves a problem that seemed impossible yesterday. On the nervous child who walks through the gate for the first time and, months later, runs through it without looking back. On friendships that begin in a classroom and continue long after the lesson ends.

Those moments rarely appear in an annual report. They are, however, the moments that make a school.

FROM 2014 TO WHAT COMES NEXT

The Maplewood story has always been about looking forward without forgetting where we started. Our Canadian educational foundation remains at the heart of the school. Our Emirati setting shapes our sense of community and belonging. Our international student body brings perspectives from more than fifty countries into the same classrooms.

Together, these influences have created something distinctly Maplewood. **A school that is Canadian in educational excellence, Emirati in spirit, international in outlook and human in its values.**

That identity has not appeared overnight. It has been built year by year, student by student, teacher by teacher.

And that is why this issue looks back before it looks ahead. The Maplewood Journey is a record of where we have come from, not as a celebration of the past for its own sake, but as a way of understanding the foundations beneath the next chapter.

Because Maplewood 2.0 is not about starting again. It is about building on what already exists. Taking the lessons of the past. Listening to the needs of today's students. And imagining what a school should look like for the children who will walk through its doors tomorrow.

THE NEXT CHAPTER

Every generation of students arrives with a different world waiting for them. The children entering Maplewood today will graduate into a world shaped by technologies and possibilities that are difficult to predict.

That places a responsibility on schools. We cannot simply teach children what the world looks like today. We have to help them develop the confidence, creativity, character and curiosity to shape what comes next.

That means giving them knowledge, but also giving them the courage to ask questions. It means teaching them how to use technology without losing the human skills that technology cannot replace. It means creating opportunities to collaborate, to fail safely, to try again, to lead and to contribute.

Most of all, it means remembering that behind every strategy, every programme and every classroom is a child. That is where the Maplewood journey has always led us. And that is where it continues.

The past tells us where we came from. The children tell us where we go next.

The Editors
MAPLEWOOD MAGAZINE



SHEIKH ZAYED ON EDUCATION

"Education is like a lantern which lights your way in a dark alley."

THE LATE SHEIKH ZAYED BIN SULTAN AL NAHYAN

Founding Father of the United Arab Emirates

A DEDICATION

This edition is dedicated to

Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan

who held that education is the light a country carries into its own future, and who built a nation by teaching it.

FOUNDING FATHER OF THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES



THE PRESIDENT ON EDUCATION

Education remains the foundation of our nation's continued advancement, and the UAE is committed to investing in our students as we work collectively towards shaping a better future for all.

SHEIKH MOHAMED BIN ZAYED AL NAHYAN

President of the United Arab Emirates

ON EDUCATION, AUGUST 2025

THE PRESIDENT

His Highness

Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan

"On World Teachers' Day, we honour their contribution and reaffirm that education remains at the heart of the UAE's development vision."

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES



THE CROWN PRINCE ON EDUCATION

The education system serves as both a shield against current challenges and a gateway to future progress and prosperity.

SHEIKH KHALED BIN MOHAMED BIN ZAYED AL NAHYAN

Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi

AT THE EDUCATION FIRST FORUM, ABU DHABI, 2024

THE CROWN PRINCE

His Highness

Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan

"The legacy of Sheikh Zayed remains a beacon of goodness that illuminates the path for present and future generations."

CROWN PRINCE OF ABU DHABI



CHAIRMAN

H.E. Saeed Eid Saeed Alghafli

MAPLEWOOD CANADIAN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

H.E. SAEED EID SAEED ALGHAFLI

Everything we aspire to achieve at Maplewood begins with a conviction deeply rooted in this country.

Our Founding Father, the late **Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan**, may his soul rest in peace, taught us that the true wealth of a nation lies in its people, and that education is among the greatest investments we can make in their future. That philosophy helped build the United Arab Emirates - a nation that placed people, knowledge and human potential at the heart of its progress.

Today, **His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE**, carries that vision forward with a powerful message of belonging: that in the UAE, everyone can share an Emirati spirit through their love for this land and their contribution to it.

At Maplewood, we see the meaning of that message every single day.

More than 50 nationalities come together within our school. Our students carry different passports, speak different languages and come from different cultures, yet they learn together, play together and grow together in a country they call home. In many ways, Maplewood is a small reflection of the UAE itself: **many nationalities, one community and a shared future.**

This is also where the philosophies of the UAE and Canada meet so naturally. Both societies have been shaped by diversity and share a belief in inclusion, tolerance, mutual respect, opportunity and the dignity of every individual. These should never be merely words displayed on a wall. They should be experiences our children live every day - in their classrooms, their friendships and the way they learn to see the world and one another.

For that reason, a Canadian curriculum in Abu Dhabi should never feel like an education simply imported from somewhere else. It must be authentically Canadian in its academic rigour, curiosity and global outlook, while being deeply rooted in the **language, heritage, identity, values and ambitions of the United Arab Emirates**.

Since 2014, Maplewood has sought to bring these worlds together while embracing innovation in education. Our alumni have gone on to study and build their futures at leading universities and institutions across North America, Europe and beyond. Wherever their journeys take them, I hope they carry with them something equally important: **the values and experiences of the country in which they grew.**

With belonging also comes responsibility.

Every Maplewood student, whatever passport they carry, should understand that being educated in this country means something: **to respect it, to contribute to it and to become part of its continuing story.**

Our responsibility therefore extends far beyond examinations, grades and university admissions. We must help form young people who think independently, lead with character, remain proud of their own identity while embracing others, and understand that success is measured not only by what they achieve for themselves, but also by what they contribute to the society around them.

That is the Maplewood we are building: Canadian in educational excellence, Emirati in spirit, international in outlook, and human in its values.

This magazine is another small expression of that vision. Each month, it will capture the life of our school - what happens in our classrooms, on our fields and throughout our community - while giving our students a place to share their achievements, ideas and voices. I hope that within these pages, every Maplewood family will find something that makes them proud.

To our teachers and staff, thank you for carrying this responsibility every day. To our parents, thank you for entrusting us with what is most precious to you.

And to our students from **more than 50 nations**: you may come from different parts of the world, but here you learn under one roof, grow within one community and share in the extraordinary story of the country you call home.

May Maplewood always be a place where every child belongs, every culture is respected, every potential is nurtured, and every student learns not only how to succeed in the world, but how to make the world around them better.

HE Saeed Al Ghafli
CHAIRMAN
MAPLEWOOD CANADIAN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

MAPLEWOOD



Google Digital Campus in the region

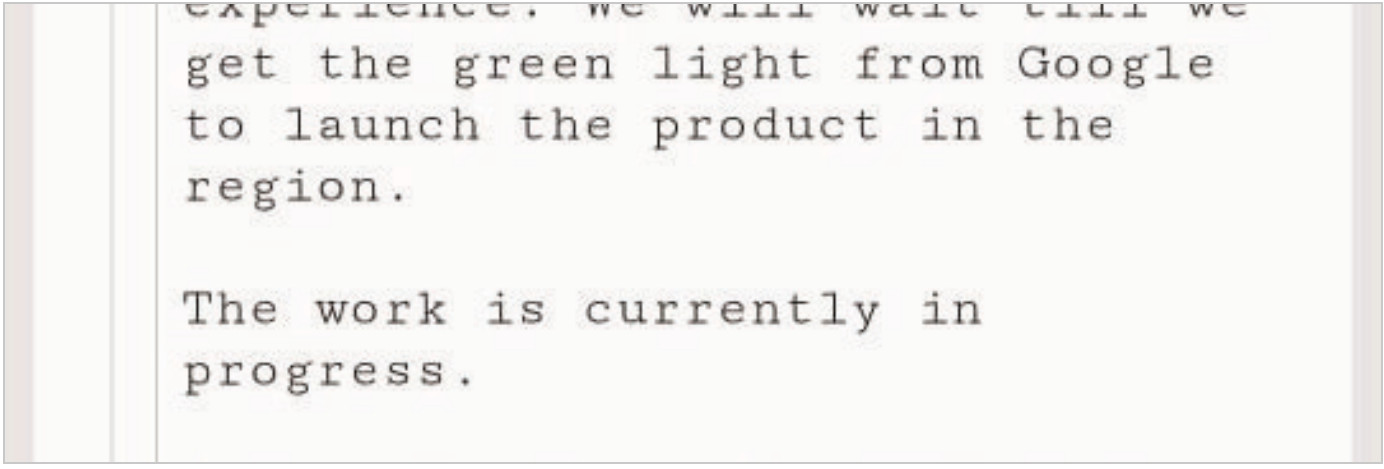
The work began in 2014, before Chromebooks were sold in the Emirates.

BEFORE THE MARKET EXISTED · THE LEGACY · FIRST GOOGLE DIGITAL CAMPUS

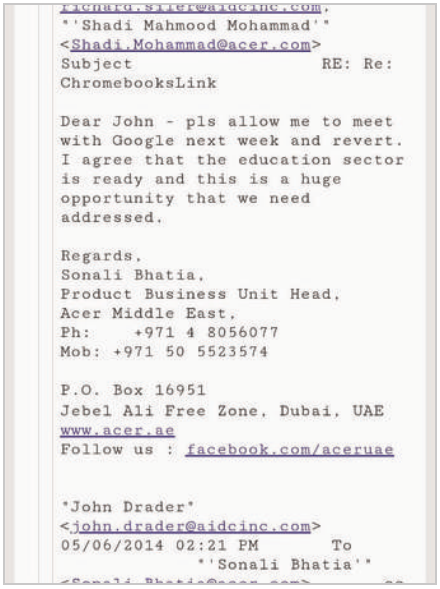
Maplewood was the first Google Digital Campus in the United Arab Emirates. That is a sentence the school can say plainly, and it is worth explaining what stands behind it, because the phrase has since been used loosely by a great many schools.

WHAT CAME FIRST

The work began in 2014, before the market existed here. Google had no education footprint in the region, Chromebooks were not yet sold in the Emirates, and the devices had to be brought in through a distributor while the product itself was still waiting for a regional launch. The school did not wait for the technology to become normal. It went and found it.


experience. We will wait till we get the green light from Google to launch the product in the region.

The work is currently in progress.


richard.siler@aidcinc.com,
"'Shadi Mahmood Mohammad'"
<Shadi.Mohammad@acer.com>
Subject RE: Re: ChromebooksLink

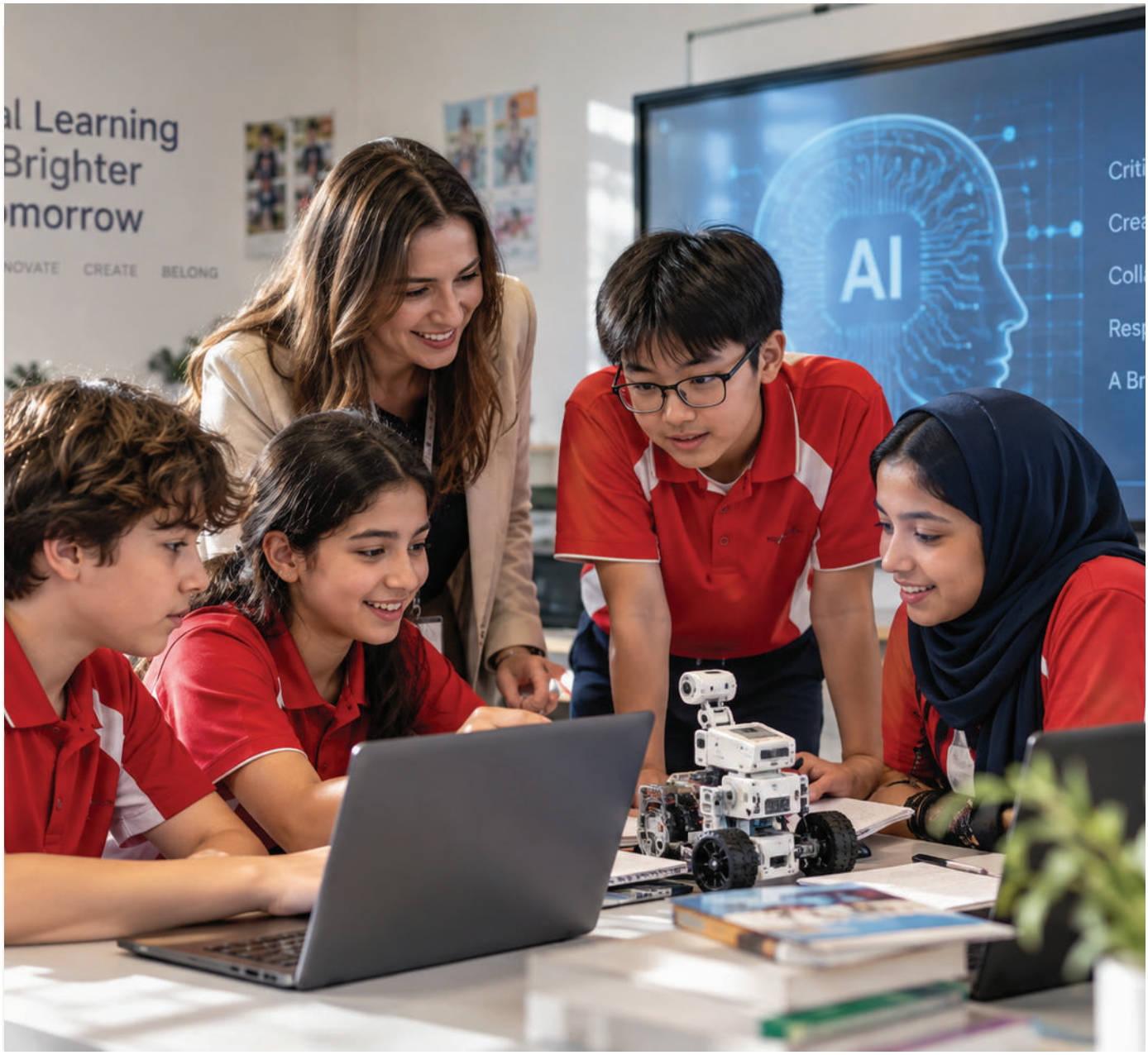
Dear John - pls allow me to meet with Google next week and revert. I agree that the education sector is ready and this is a huge opportunity that we need addressed.

Regards,
Sonali Bhatia,
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"'Sonali Bhatia'"





The school did not wait for the technology to become normal. It went and found it.

FROM DIGITAL TO AI

What followed was not a purchase but a rebuild. A campus does not become digital by owning devices. It becomes digital when the network holds, when a teacher can set work that only exists on a screen and trust that thirty children will reach it, when a lesson does not stop because a login fails, and when the school stops treating any of that as remarkable.

That decade of ordinary competence is the reason the school can now talk seriously about artificial intelligence. A school that has never made technology work reliably has no business claiming to lead in a field built on it. Maplewood has the receipts, and they are ten years old. ■



AI and Robotics Welcome Day on Campus

Open to the students who wanted to build rather than watch.

TWO DAYS, NO TIMETABLE · THE FIRST AI AND ROBOTICS DAYS

A school can say it is serious about artificial intelligence and robotics for years without a student ever touching either. The AI and Robotics Days exist to close that gap. For two days the ordinary timetable steps aside and the school becomes a workshop, with benches, components, laptops and a deadline.

A BRIEF, NOT AN INSTRUCTION

Students work in teams against a brief. They are given a problem rather than an instruction, and the brief is written so that the obvious answer does not work. The point is not to produce something impressive by the end of the second day. It is to make a class of children discover, together and in public, that a plan survives contact with a machine only if it was a good plan.









A robot will not be talked round. It is the least sentimental teacher a child will ever meet.

WHAT CHANGES AFTERWARDS

The competition element matters more than it looks. A robot that will not complete its task is the least sentimental teacher a child will ever meet. It does not accept a plausible answer, it does not award effort, and it will not be talked round. Students learn to break a problem into steps, test each one, and find the single step that is wrong, because there is no other way through.

What the days really change is the atmosphere afterwards. Students who spent two days building come back to the classroom expecting to be allowed to try things. Teachers who watched a quiet child lead a team see that child differently for the rest of the year. That is the return on two days of disruption, and it is why the school intends to keep running them. ■

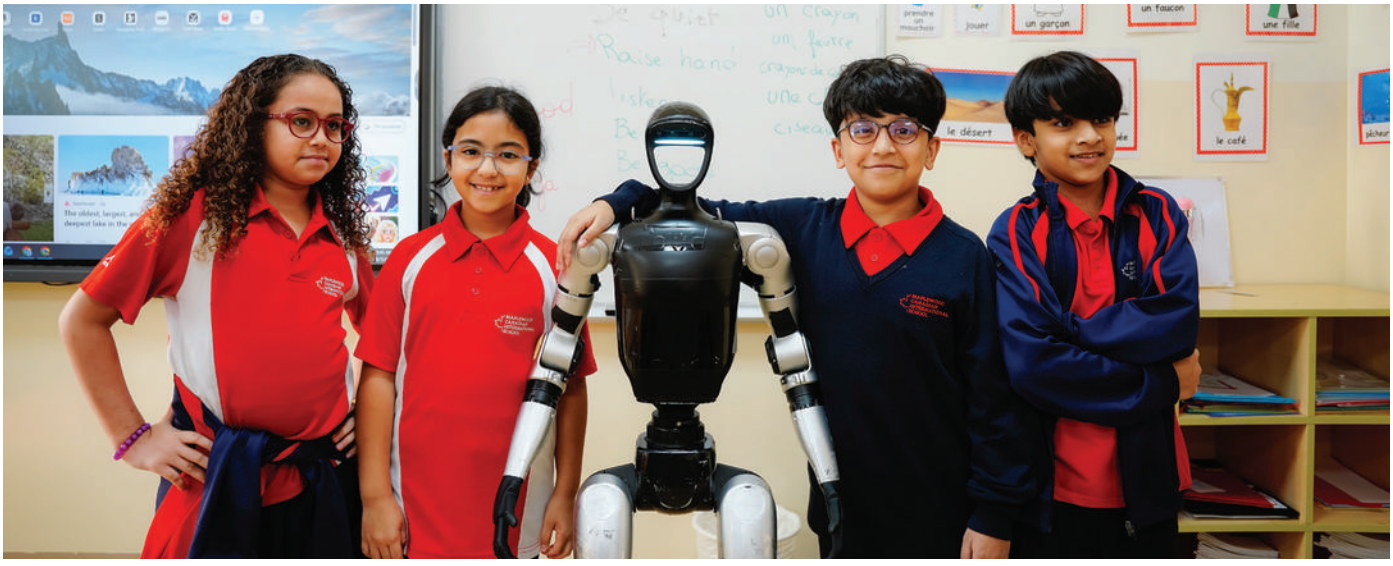


WHAT A FULLY AI CAMPUS MEANS · THE AI AND ROBOTICS VISION

Maplewood was the first Google Digital Campus in the country. The stated ambition now is to become a fully AI campus. That phrase is doing a lot of work, so it is worth setting out plainly what it means here and what it does not.

THREE PLACES IT ACTUALLY LIVES

It does not mean machines teaching children. It does not mean replacing staff, and it does not mean putting a screen in front of a five-year-old who should be handling sand and water. Any school promising those things has misunderstood both the technology and the age group.



What it means is that intelligent systems become an ordinary part of how the school works, in three places. In the classroom, as a tool students learn to direct, question and check. In teaching, where a clearer picture of what a class has and has not understood lets a teacher act sooner. And in the school's own running, where routine administrative work can be done faster and the time returned to children.

Robotics is the physical half of the same idea, and for many students it is the more persuasive half. A robot that will not complete its task is an honest teacher: it does not accept a plausible answer, it does not award effort, and it forces a student to break a problem into steps and find the one that is wrong. That habit transfers to everything else.





The programme runs from simple sequencing in the early years through to programming, sensors and autonomous behaviour in the senior school. What develops alongside it matters as much: the willingness to test rather than guess, and the patience to find the fault instead of starting again.

"A robot that will not work is an honest teacher. It does not accept a plausible answer."

THE GUARDRAILS

The guardrails are as much a part of the vision as the ambition. Students are taught where assistance ends and substitution begins, and are expected to be able to explain their own work. Assessment is designed so that the thinking is visible, not just the output.

Privacy is treated as a first-order concern rather than a footnote. Intelligent systems run on data, much of it belonging to children, and a school that is casual about that has no business calling itself a leader in the field.



The measure of this will not be the equipment in the building. It will be whether a Maplewood graduate can pick up a tool nobody has taught them yet, work out what it is good for, and tell you where it stops being trustworthy. ■

WHERE IT ACTUALLY LIVES

IN THE CLASSROOM
As a tool students learn to direct, question and check.

IN TEACHING
A clearer picture of what a class has and has not understood, so a teacher can act sooner.

IN THE RUNNING OF THE SCHOOL
Routine administrative work done faster, and the time returned to children.

And what it is not: machines teaching children, staff replaced, or a screen put in front of a five-year-old who should be handling sand and water.

MAPLEWOOD FORMED

1st

Abu Dhabi’s dedicated school-based equestrian club

National identity is part of our vision.

A TEACHER THAT CANNOT BE HURRIED · ABU DHABI'S FIRST SCHOOL-BASED EQUESTRIAN CLUB

Most schools that offer riding offer a trip. Maplewood runs it as a club, which means the same students return week after week, are known by name, and progress rather than sample. That difference sounds administrative and is not: it is the whole reason the thing teaches anything.

A CLUB, NOT A TRIP

A horse is the only teacher in a school that cannot be reasoned with, flattered or rushed. It reads a rider before the rider has said anything, and it responds to what is actually happening rather than to what the child intended. A student who is anxious will find the animal anxious. A student who is calm and clear will find themselves carried. There are few faster ways to learn that composure is a practical skill rather than a personality trait.



A horse is the only teacher in a school that cannot be reasoned with, flattered or rushed.

THE PART BEFORE THE RIDING

The care matters as much as the riding. Tack is checked before it is used, feet are picked out, the horse is cooled and settled before anyone goes home. Children who begin the term needing to be told these things do them unprompted by the end of it, because the animal in front of them makes the reason obvious in a way a rota never does.

The club also reaches students who are not drawn to team sport. There is no crowd, no bench and nowhere to hide, only a rider and a task that has to be done in the right order. Confidence built that way tends to hold, and it travels back into the classroom with them. ■



MAPLEWOOD INTRODUCED



Cluster Programme for Inclusion

Support designed around the individual child rather than around a category.

THE CHILD, NOT THE LABEL · THE FIRST CLUSTER PROGRAMME FOR INCLUSION

Inclusion usually fails at the same point. A child is identified, given a category, and then given the support that category attracts, whether or not it is the support they need. The cluster programme starts from the other end. It asks what is actually stopping this student, groups children by that, and puts the help where the obstacle is.

WHAT A CLUSTER ACTUALLY IS

In practice a cluster is small, specific and temporary. Several students who all lose the thread when instructions are spoken rather than written will work together on that, with a teacher who is planning for exactly that difficulty. When it is no longer the obstacle, the cluster changes or ends. Nobody is parked in a group for a year because of a form filled in when they were six.



Nobody is parked in a group for a year because of a form filled in when they were six.

WHAT IT ASKS OF TEACHERS

This also changes what teachers are asked to do. Instead of being handed a list of labels and left to interpret it, a teacher is told what specific difficulty to plan around in the next fortnight. That is a question a teacher can actually answer, and it produces adjustments in the classroom rather than reports in a file.

The measure is not how many students are in a programme. It is whether a student who was struggling can now do the thing they could not do before, and whether the adults around them noticed early enough to matter. Progress is measured from where a particular learner started, which is the only measurement that tells you whether the teaching is working. ■

PARENTS AND COMMUNITY · PARENT INCUBATION AND PARENT SKILLING

Maplewood treats the relationship with families as a programme rather than an afterthought, and describes it in two parts: parent incubation and parent skilling.

Parent incubation is the work of bringing a family into the school properly. A new parent has practical questions about the day and deeper ones about whether their child will be happy. The purpose of incubation is to answer both early, so that a family understands how the Alberta programme works, what is expected of their child at this stage and who to speak to when something is unclear. A parent who understands the school can support their child inside it.



Parent skilling goes further. It recognises that families are being asked to support learning in areas that did not exist when they were at school themselves. Sessions and workshops are intended to build parents' own capability, whether that is understanding how reading develops, knowing what responsible use of AI looks like at home, or being able to read a progress report with confidence.

"Teachers, families and school systems all exist to support the same journey."

A school campus sends messages before anyone says a word. A bright, organised classroom suggests that learning has a purpose. A well-used library signals that reading and research matter. Laboratories invite investigation. Sports facilities communicate that physical development belongs within education. Shared spaces can encourage community or create unnecessary friction depending on how they are designed and managed.

Parents and schools see different parts of a child's life. Teachers observe students in classrooms, groups and academic situations. Families understand history, personality, routines, ambitions and concerns that may not be visible at school. When these perspectives are shared constructively, students benefit.

Neither part assumes that parents should become teachers. The aim is a shared understanding, so that the messages a child receives about effort, honesty and technology are broadly the same in both places. ■

MAPLEWOOD
CANADIAN
INTERNATIONAL
NURSERY

NURSERY

Nursery is where learning begins

THE YEARS THAT MATTER MOST

When we think about education, we often picture classrooms, textbooks, examinations and eventually universities. But education begins long before any of these.

It begins with a child asking, **"Why?"** It begins when little hands try to build something and it falls down, and they try again.

It begins when a child learns to wait for a turn, to share a toy, to express a feeling, to listen to a story, to make a friend, or simply to discover that they are capable of doing something on their own.

These moments may appear small to an adult. **To a young child, they are the foundations of a life.**

NURSERY IS NOT JUST CHILDCARE

There is sometimes a tendency to think of nursery as the stage before "real school" begins. As early-years educators, we see it very differently.



Nursery is where learning begins.

During the earliest years, children are developing at an extraordinary pace. Their experiences, relationships and environments are helping to shape the foundations upon which later learning, behaviour and well-being are built.

A conversation with a teacher develops language. Building a tower introduces ideas of balance, shape and problem-solving. A disagreement over a toy becomes an early lesson in communication and empathy.

For young children, play and learning are not opposites. Play is one of their most powerful ways of learning.

BEFORE WHAT TO KNOW, HOW TO LEARN

Of course, early literacy, numeracy and communication are important parts of nursery education. But our responsibility is larger.





Before a child can become a successful student, they need to develop curiosity, confidence, independence, concentration and a love of discovery**. They need to ask questions without being afraid of getting something wrong.**



They need to discover the wonderful feeling that comes from saying: "I did it myself."

Our purpose is not to rush childhood in order to make children older before their time. It is to make their childhood so rich in meaningful experiences that they naturally become ready for what comes next.

RELATIONSHIPS COME BEFORE LESSONS

Perhaps the most important part of an excellent nursery cannot be found in any curriculum document. It is the relationship between a child and the adults around them. Young children learn best when they feel safe, known, valued and loved**.**

A teacher who notices when a usually energetic child becomes quiet; who listens patiently to a story that takes several minutes to tell; or who understands that a child sometimes needs reassurance before they need instruction, that teacher is doing some of the most important educational work there is.

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LEARNING TO LIVE WITH OTHERS

Our wider school community represents **more than 50 nationalities**. From their earliest educational experiences, our children grow alongside friends whose families may speak different languages, celebrate different traditions and come from different parts of the world.

A three-year-old does not need a lecture about diversity. **They need a friend who is different from them.**

When children eat together, play together, solve problems together and celebrate together, respect and inclusion become something they experience naturally rather than something we have to explain to them later.

PARENTS ARE OUR FIRST PARTNERS

No nursery, however excellent, replaces the family. Parents are a child's first teachers, and some of the most powerful learning continues to happen in ordinary moments at home, talking during a car journey, reading a bedtime story, asking about the day, or simply giving a child our undivided attention.

Our role is therefore not to educate children separately from their families, but to work **in partnership with them**.



PROTECTING THE WONDER OF CHILDHOOD

Children have many years ahead of them to become adults. They have only a few precious years to be very young.

We should not waste those years by constantly asking how quickly we can make them read, write, calculate or compete. We should also ask whether they are becoming curious. Whether they can make friends. Whether they can express kindness. Whether they still become excited when they discover something new.



Because ultimately, the purpose of early education is not simply to prepare a child for the **next classroom**. It is to begin preparing them for **life**.

And our greatest hope is that every child who begins their journey with us leaves with something that no examination can adequately measure: **the confidence to explore, the kindness to live alongside others, and a lifelong love of learning.** ■



NOT A WAITING ROOM · KG1 AND KG2 AT MAPLEWOOD

KG is the part of education most often described as preparation for something else. It is treated as the corridor before the building. That is the wrong way round. The years between three and six are when a child builds the machinery that every later year depends on, and a child who arrives in Grade 1 without it spends years catching up on something that was never taught.

WHAT IS ACTUALLY BEING LEARNED

Consider what is actually being learned. How to be apart from a parent for a whole morning and be all right. How to wait. How to ask for help from an adult who is not family. How to lose a game and come back to it. How to hold a pencil, sit at a table, listen while somebody else speaks, and start something you did not choose. None of that is academic, and all of it decides whether academic teaching can happen at all.

A child who arrives in Grade 1 without those habits spends years catching up on something nobody taught them.

THE COST OF STARTING TOO EARLY

Language is the other half. Vocabulary at five predicts reading at eleven more reliably than almost anything else a school can measure, and vocabulary is built by conversation rather than by worksheets. A KG room that is full of adult talk, questions, stories and naming is doing more for later literacy than one that starts formal reading a year early.

The mistake schools make is to push the Grade 1 curriculum downwards. Formal work introduced too early looks impressive to a visiting parent and costs the child the thing that actually matters: the confidence that school is a place where they can manage. Maplewood keeps the KG years deliberately unhurried, and expects to be judged on what those children can do at eight rather than on what they can recite at five.

WHAT KG1 AND KG2 ACTUALLY DO

In KG1 and KG2, learning begins with relationships, language, movement, exploration and purposeful play. Young children need a safe environment in which they can ask questions, try new things and build confidence. They are learning academic foundations, but they are also learning how school works: how to listen, take turns, communicate needs, follow routines, care for materials and participate as part of a group. These habits form the base upon which later academic independence is built.

COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

Young children think by doing. They sort, compare, count, predict and test. A tray of shells becomes a lesson in classification. A tower that falls becomes a question about balance. Adults support this by asking what the child noticed, what they expected and what they might try next, which turns activity into reasoning.

LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Language grows through conversation more than instruction. Children need adults who listen properly, extend what they say and introduce new words in context. Stories, rhymes and songs build vocabulary and the rhythm of English, while children who speak other languages at home are supported to keep them. Early literacy follows from this, not before it.

EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Small children feel strongly and have few words for it. Learning to name a feeling, wait, recover from disappointment and ask for help is genuine educational work. It needs patient adults, predictable routines and the understanding that a difficult morning is information rather than misbehaviour.



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

A classroom is often a child's first experience of belonging to a group outside the family. Sharing space, taking turns, joining a game and settling a disagreement are skills that have to be taught and practised. Children who manage these well find the rest of school easier.





PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Gross motor and fine motor skills develop side by side, through climbing frames and paintbrushes alike. Physical confidence in the early years supports independence in dressing, eating and moving safely, and prepares the hand and eye for formal writing.

CREATIVITY

Creativity in early childhood is not decoration. It is how children rehearse ideas. Role play, construction, drawing, music and messy materials let a child try out a version of the world and see what happens. The value lies in the making, not the finished object.

HOW PROGRESS IS UNDERSTOOD

These six areas are assessed through observation rather than testing. Teachers watch what children choose, how they persist and what they say, and use that to plan what comes next. Families receive that picture in plain language, because a parent who understands how their child is developing can support it at home. ■

NOT A WAITING ROOM · THE IMPORTANCE OF PRE-SCHOOL

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PAST BEING IMPRESSED · THE AI ACADEMY · CHANGING THE WORLD

The AI Academy is the school's answer to a simple question: what does a student do once they are past being impressed? Most schools stop at literacy, teaching children to use the tools safely and honestly. That is necessary and it is not enough. The academy is for the students who want to open the thing up.

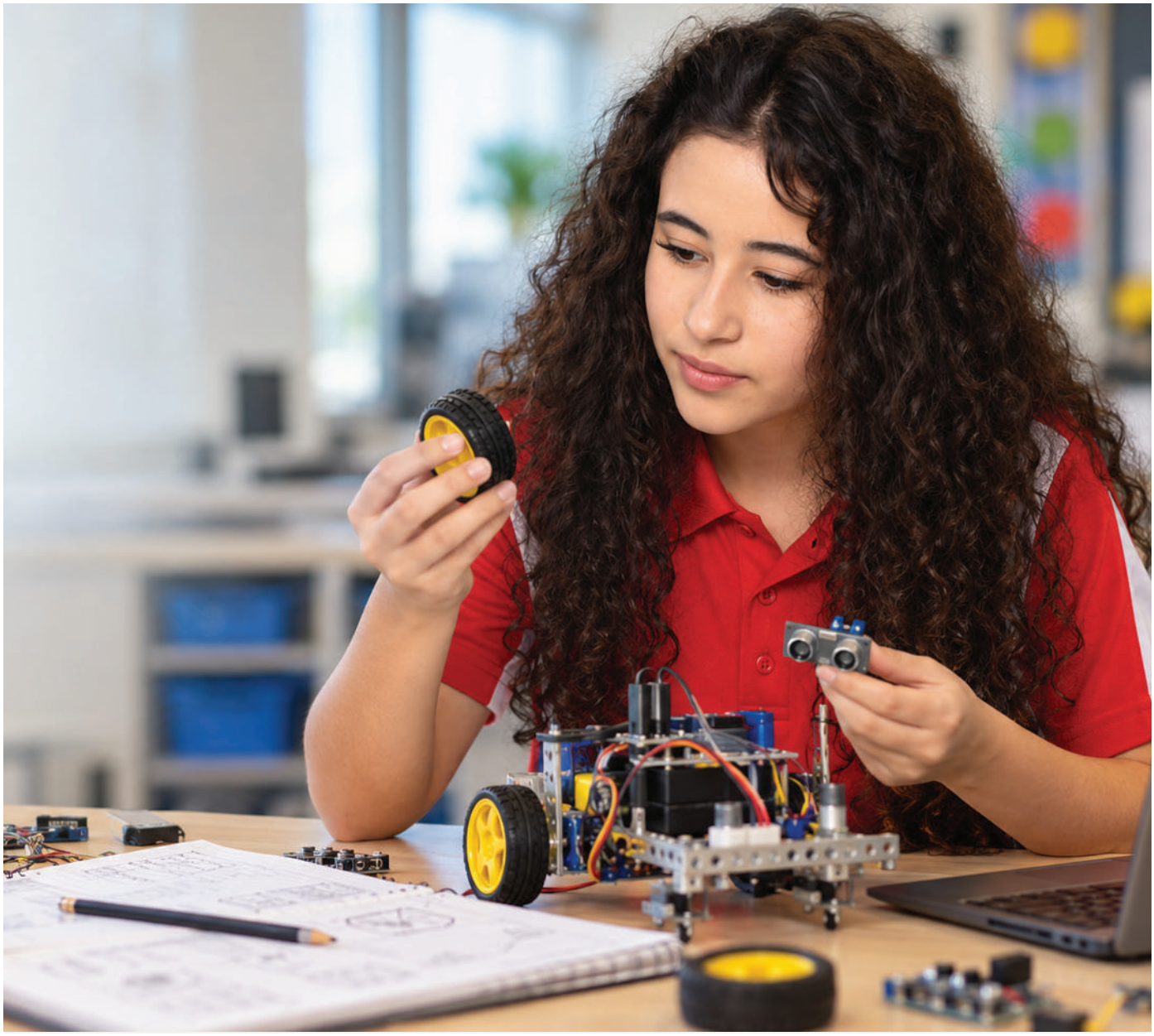
WHAT STUDENTS ACTUALLY DO

It runs as a programme rather than a club. Students work through a sequence: how a model is trained and on what, why it is confident when it is wrong, how to evaluate an output instead of accepting it, and how to build something small that solves a real problem for a real person. The work is judged on whether it functions and whether the student can explain it, not on how impressive the demonstration looks.









Students who arrive expecting magic leave with something more useful, which is judgement.

WHY THE UNGLAMOROUS PART MATTERS

The subject matter is deliberately unglamorous in places. Data has to be gathered and cleaned. Assumptions have to be written down. A model that performs well on the examples it was given and badly on everything else has to be recognised as a failure rather than a success. Students who come expecting magic leave with something more useful, which is judgement.

The title of this page is a large claim and it is meant as a direction rather than a promise. What a school can honestly offer is a generation that understands the machinery well enough to argue with it. That is where changing anything begins. ■



A timetable can only hold so much. The clubs are where a student follows something further than a lesson can take it, and where a school finds out what a child will do when the choice is their own. Five run at Maplewood, and each one asks for a different kind of commitment.

They are not a reward for finishing work early. A club meets whether or not it is convenient, it expects the same student back next week, and it is the place where a quiet child in a classroom often turns out to be the one who leads.





01

Equestrian Club

Balance, patience and an animal that will not be argued with

Riding asks for something school rarely asks for: a working partnership with an animal. Students learn the seat and the aids, but they also learn that a horse has to be cared for before it is ridden, and that nervousness travels down the reins. It rewards steadiness rather than speed.

The club suits children who are not drawn to team sport. There is no crowd, no substitute bench and nowhere to hide, only a rider, an animal and a task that has to be done in the right order. Confidence built that way tends to hold.

It teaches responsibility in a way a classroom cannot. Tack is checked before it is used, feet are picked out, and the horse is settled before the rider leaves. Children who begin the term needing to be told do these things unprompted by the end of it.

02

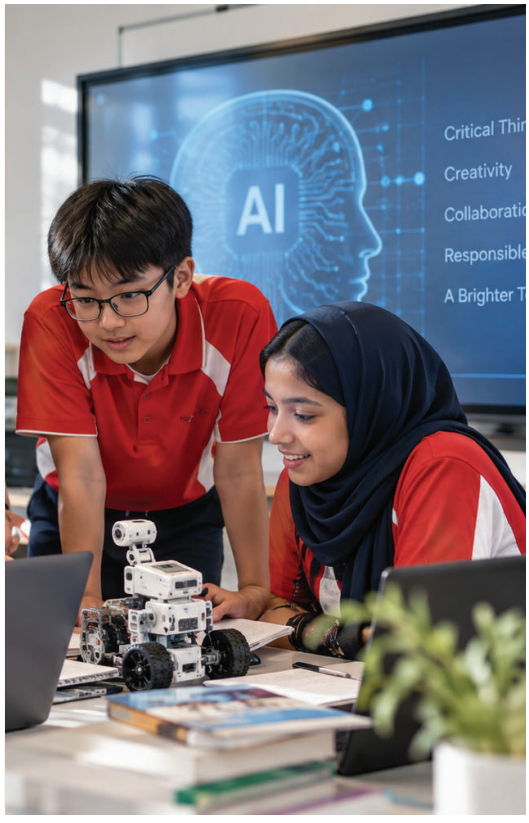
Maplewood AI Lab

Where the ambition stops being a statement and becomes an afternoon

The lab is the practical half of what the school says about artificial intelligence. Students build, prompt, test and break things, and are expected to explain what they made, how it works and where it fails. Nothing is accepted because it sounded convincing.

Sessions run as workshops rather than lessons. A student arrives with an idea, builds the smallest version of it that will run, and shows it to the group. The questions that follow are the point: what does it do when the input is wrong, and how would you know if it were wrong?

It is deliberately unglamorous. Most of an afternoon goes on finding the one line, the one setting or the one assumption stopping the thing working. Students who stay with it develop the habit that matters most here, which is refusing an answer they cannot explain.



03

Maplewood Sports Academy

Swimming, football, basketball, cricket and badminton

Five disciplines, coached rather than supervised. The academy is for students who want to train and not only to play: fixed sessions, a squad, and a coach who will tell them what is not working yet. Every discipline runs across the age groups.

Training is separated from playing on purpose. A squad session works on the parts of a game that do not improve by themselves: the second effort in football, the turn in the pool, footwork in badminton, the follow through in cricket, boxing out in basketball.

Students commit to a discipline for a term rather than dropping in, and that commitment is what makes coaching possible, because a coach can only build on what was done last week. Fixtures follow from the training rather than standing in for it.



SWIMMING



FOOTBALL



BASKETBALL



CRICKET



BADMINTON





04

Maplewood Science Lab

Experiments that take longer than a lesson

A science lesson has to finish by the bell. The science lab does not, so students can design an investigation properly, run it, and account for a result that did not go the way they expected. Explaining a failed experiment is treated as the real work.

Students choose a question, plan how to test it, and are held to the plan. Variables are controlled or the result is worthless, and that lesson lands harder when it is their own afternoon that has been spent than when it is printed on a worksheet.

Results are written up and presented to the group, including the ones that failed, with an account of why. Science taught only through experiments that work gives children a false picture of the subject and an unhelpful picture of themselves.

05

Maplewood Readers Club

Readers are leaders

The club is built on that phrase. Students read widely rather than narrowly, argue about what they have read, and recommend books to people who have not read them yet. Reading for pleasure is the habit that carries every other subject.

The reading list deliberately mixes fiction with history, biography and science writing, on the grounds that a reader who only reads one kind of book has a preference rather than a habit. Members are asked to finish things they would once have abandoned.

Meetings are for arguing. A book is recommended, contested and defended, and members are expected to say why rather than whether they liked it. That is where the leading in "readers are leaders" actually happens: in front of people, about something you have thought about.



AHLAN · CHILD SUPPORT BEYOND LEARNING

Ahlan is an Arabic greeting. It means welcome, and it carries a warmth that the English word has partly lost. Maplewood uses it for the support a child receives beyond the lesson.

Children do not stop needing help when a lesson ends. A student may be new to the country, new to the language, new to the building, or simply having a difficult term. Another may be managing a change at home that nobody at school knows about. Academic support alone does not reach any of this.



Ahlan exists to make sure that every child has an adult in the school who knows them, and knows when something has changed. That is the practical core of pastoral care: not a system, but a person who notices. Around it sit the ordinary supports a school can offer, including help settling in, support with English where it is needed, and a route for a child or a family to raise a concern and be taken seriously.

"A child should be able to ask for help without it becoming an event."

THE TRANSITIONS THAT MATTER

The programme is also about the transitions that schools tend to underestimate. Moving from preschool into Grade 1, from elementary into middle school, and from middle school into the demands of high school are each significant for a child, even when they are handled well. Ahlan treats these moments as points where a student should be watched a little more closely, not less.

Support of this kind works best when it is unremarkable. A child should be able to ask for help without it becoming an event, and a family should be able to raise something small before it becomes something large.

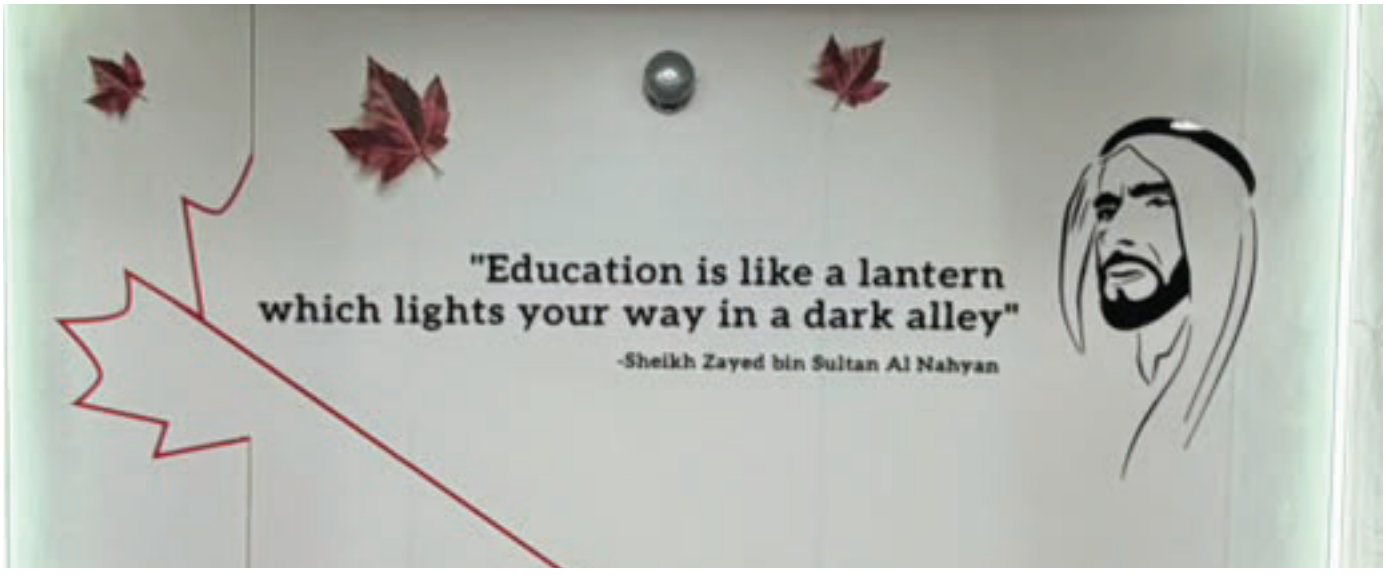
A school that welcomes a child once, on the first day, has done the easy part. Ahlan is the attempt to keep welcoming them. ■

AN EMIRATI SCHOOL THAT TEACHES THE WORLD · NATIONAL IDENTITY

An international school can teach children about the world and still leave them oddly disconnected from the country they actually live in. Avoiding that is deliberate work, and it does not happen through celebrations alone.

The formal part is the curriculum the UAE requires: Arabic, Islamic Studies, Moral Education and UAE Social Studies. It would be possible to treat these as compliance and timetable them as lightly as the rules allow. Treated that way, students learn quickly that these subjects are the ones that do not really count, which is the opposite of the intended lesson.

Taught properly, they do something no other part of the timetable can. Arabic gives access to the language of the country and, for those who already speak it, the academic register they will need. Islamic Studies gives Muslim students structured learning connected to faith and practice. Moral Education and UAE Social Studies open questions about citizenship, responsibility and the relationship between a person and a society.



The informal part is the school's own habits. Which languages appear on the walls and the signage. Whether national occasions are prepared for over weeks or announced the day before. Whether Arabic is heard in the corridors as a working language or only in the lesson. Children read all of this accurately, long before anyone explains it to them.

“Children read a building long before they read a policy.”

The aim is not that every student becomes Emirati. It is that an Emirati student finds their country taken seriously here, and that every other student leaves understanding the place they grew up in well enough to contribute to it. ■



50+

COUNTRIES

ONE GLOBAL FAMILY

Students from **50+ countries** choose Maplewood for a Canadian education in Abu Dhabi.

More than fifty nationalities are represented in the school. That figure is easy to print on a prospectus and easy to leave as decoration, so it is worth saying what it actually changes about a school day.

It changes the ordinary business of disagreeing. A class drawn from fifty countries will not share a single set of assumptions about directness, authority, humour or how to argue. Students have to work out how to be understood by people who do not start where they start, and they have to do it constantly rather than in a lesson about it.

It changes what a subject looks like. A discussion about migration, water, trade or history has people in the room with a personal stake in it. That raises the standard of the conversation and makes lazy generalisations harder to sustain.

It also changes what students take with them. A young person who has spent thirteen years working alongside people from everywhere arrives at university already able to do something many of their peers are still learning.

There is a practical dimension as well. Families move, and children arrive partway through a year having left a school system that worked differently. A school used to that does not treat a new arrival as a problem to be absorbed. It has a routine for it, and other students who remember being new themselves.

None of this happens automatically. A building can hold fifty nationalities and still let them separate into groups that never mix. Mixing has to be designed: in how classes are grouped, how teams are picked, and how seating is arranged. Left alone, children will usually sit with the familiar.

“Fifty nationalities in one building is not a statistic. It is a daily exercise in being understood.”

The figure matters, but the habit matters more. What we want is not students who can list the countries in their class, but students for whom difference is simply the normal condition of a room.

MAPLE MOVE · THE SPORTS ACADEMY AT MAPLEWOOD

Maplewood is opening its pitches, courts, halls and pool to a sports academy of its own. Maple Move is a complete sports and movement academy on a school campus families already know, open to every child and rewarding for Maplewood families.

It runs after school, at weekends and through the holidays. The school already owns a strong academic story, from Nursery to Grade 12 and on to universities in the United States and Europe. Maple Move adds the sports story parents look for.

EIGHT PILLARS, ONE MEMBERSHIP

Team sports covers football, basketball, volleyball and cricket. Racquets begins with badminton, adding padel and tennis where the courts allow. Aquatics runs from learn-to-swim through stroke development to a swim squad. Martial arts covers karate, taekwondo and jiu-jitsu.



Dance takes in ballet, contemporary and children's dance with graded exams. Mind and body is yoga, for children, teenagers and parents alike. Skating starts with roller and inline on campus. Equestrian means riding lessons and a pony club with partner stables. Underneath all eight sits athlete development: strength, speed and agility.

"Move. Grow. Belong."

FROM FIRST KICK TO FIRST TROPHY

The pathway runs in four stages. Discover, for ages three to six, is fun fundamentals and a multi-sport sampler. Develop, six to eleven, is sport-specific skills in weekly sessions with termly assessments. Perform, nine to sixteen, means squads, fixtures and graded exams: ballet grades, belts and swim levels. Excel is tournaments, trials and links to clubs and federations.

Every child gets a termly progress report and a clear next level to work towards.

WHERE EACH SPORT HAPPENS

Football, basketball and volleyball run on the Maplewood pitches and courts. Badminton, yoga, ballet and dance are in the campus indoor stadium, and martial arts in the same hall with specialist partners. Swimming is in the campus pool. Skating begins on the campus courts and moves to a partner rink. Equestrian is at partner stables in Abu Dhabi.



The order is deliberate: the sports that live on campus start first, and the partner sports follow once booking, safeguarding and quality checks are proven.

OPEN TO EVERY CHILD

Maplewood students and the wider community train together, which is what makes the academy part of the school rather than a club beside it. Every new child is offered a free trial session, and Maplewood families pay a member price on term packages. One membership covers every sport, with one booking. ■

A HOLISTIC EDUCATION · SPORT, FITNESS AND THE WHOLE CHILD

A timetable can describe a school day, but it cannot describe a childhood. Children arrive at school with bodies that need to move, friendships that need attention and energy that has to go somewhere. A holistic education begins by accepting that, and by treating physical development as part of learning rather than a break from it.

Children spend a significant part of their lives at school. If education were only about academic lessons, it would ignore many of the experiences through which young people discover who they are. Sport, clubs, arts, friendships, leadership, competition and community activities all contribute to development.

WHAT PHYSICAL FITNESS COVERS

Physical fitness at Maplewood is understood broadly. It covers the structured work of physical education lessons, the competitive experience of school teams, and the ordinary running, climbing and playing that fills a break time. Each of these develops something different. Lessons build technique and understanding. Teams build commitment and responsibility to other people. Free play builds invention, negotiation and the confidence to take a small risk.



Younger children need movement most of all. In the early years, physical development and cognitive development are difficult to separate. A child learning to balance, throw, skip or climb is also learning to judge distance, plan a sequence of actions and persist through failure. Fine motor work with scissors, brushes and construction materials prepares the hand for writing. Time outdoors supports concentration when the class returns indoors.

“A complete education develops the whole student.”

The purpose is not to produce athletes, though some students will become them. It is to give every child a physical confidence they can carry into adulthood, and the habit of treating movement as a normal part of a good day. ■

ROOM TO MOVE · SPORT AND FACILITIES

Sport needs space, and space is the part of a school that cannot be improvised. A timetable can be rewritten and a syllabus can be revised, but a swimming pool either exists or it does not.

Swimming is the facility families ask about most, and with good reason. It is the one sport that is also a safety skill, and in this country it is close to a necessity. A pool on site means swimming is a normal part of the week rather than an outing that has to be arranged, and it means every child learns rather than only those whose families already swim.

Football carries the school's competitive life. It is where fixtures against other schools happen, where the seasons and the squads and the disappointments are, and where a good number of students first discover they are willing to train for something. The value is less in the results than in the commitment a team demands from a fourteen-year-old.

Basketball asks for something different. The court is smaller, the game is faster, and every player is involved almost constantly. It suits students who find the scale of a full pitch discouraging, and it is one of the easiest sports to keep going informally at break.



The indoor hall is what makes the programme year-round. For a large part of the year the heat makes sustained outdoor activity unwise, and a school without an indoor space simply loses those months. It also doubles as the room where the whole school can gather, which matters more than it sounds.

"A pool on site means every child learns to swim, not only the ones whose families already do."

None of this is about producing athletes, though some students will become them. It is about a school where being physically capable and reasonably fit is unremarkable, and where a child who is not naturally sporting still finds something they are willing to do. ■

OUR LEADERSHIP



PRINCIPAL

DAVID PARSONS

DAVID PARSONS · FROM THE PRINCIPAL

I am proud to serve as Principal of Maplewood Canadian International School in Abu Dhabi. Working in the UAE has strengthened my appreciation for education that respects local culture, responds to national aspirations, and supports young people in engaging confidently with an interconnected world.

My background in Canadian public education and international school leadership informs my approach at MCIS. I believe strong schools combine high expectations with meaningful relationships, inclusive practices and a clear sense of purpose. I work alongside our staff to strengthen teaching and learning, support professional growth, and create the conditions for students to develop academically and personally. Central to this work is understanding the aspirations families hold for their children and building constructive partnerships between home and school.



What I enjoy most about MCIS is the richness of its community. Students, families, and educators from the UAE and around the world bring different experiences and perspectives to school life. It is rewarding to lead a school that is firmly connected to its Abu Dhabi context while offering an Alberta-accredited education and an outward-looking international perspective. ■

“Strong schools combine high expectations with meaningful relationships, inclusive practices and a clear sense of purpose.”

CONOR DOHERTY · FROM THE VICE PRINCIPAL

As the Vice Principal at Maplewood Canadian International School (MCIS) in Abu Dhabi, I draw on 12 years of experience in education to support our academic community. Prior to stepping into this role, I served MCIS as the Head of High School and Athletics Director, alongside teaching High School Social Studies.

I have spent 8 of my 12 years in education as a dedicated staff member at MCIS. I am from Kamloops British Columbia, Canada, and completed my education at both Thompson Rivers University; where I competed on the Varsity Football team, and the University of Calgary.



My instructional background spans English, Physical Education, Social Studies, and various electives, which fuels my passion for fostering a well-rounded, engaging learning environment for every student. I really enjoy Maplewood's community and helping out with the athletic program as a coach! ■





"I really enjoy Maplewood's community, and helping out with the athletic program as a coach."



Randa Dogheim

NURSERY AND HEAD OF KG

There is sometimes a tendency to think of nursery as the stage before "real school" begins. As early-years educators, we see it very differently. Nursery is where learning begins.

Perhaps the most important part of an excellent nursery cannot be found in any curriculum document. It is the relationship between a child and the adults around them. Young children learn best when they feel safe, known, valued and loved.

Jayne G. McDougall

HEAD OF HUMANITIES; MIDDLE SCHOOL ENGLISH TEACHER

6 YEARS AT MAPLEWOOD



I thoroughly enjoy being at MCIS as it is a family! We have great teachers and students! We all help and support each other!

I look forward to coming to school as it is always exciting, fun and I enjoy being with my kids, teaching and enriching their academic lives so that they can succeed and achieve their academic and personal potential!



Donovan Gates

HIGH SCHOOL COORDINATOR / 10-12 MATHEMATICS TEACHER

1 YEAR AT MAPLEWOOD

My name is Donovan Gates and I am from Cape Town, South Africa. I am the High School coordinator and grade 10-12 Mathematics teacher. I hold a Master of Education degree in Advanced Teaching.

I have 31 years teaching experience, and 25 of these have been in the UAE. I am also qualified in teaching English, which makes me quite versatile, and allows me to help out in different departments, where needed. I love working at Maplewood because we are a tight-knit community, and we all work together to achieve our greater goal, which is, the education of our students.

Breanna Fedor

7-12 GIRLS PE TEACHER / ATHLETICS DIRECTOR

2 YEARS AT MAPLEWOOD



This is my second year at MCIS and usually you can find me in the gym with my amazing PE students! I also get the wonderful privilege of helping our Student Council plan exciting student centered events within the school! I was born and raised in Alberta, Canada and I taught there for 2 years until I received the opportunity to teach PE in London, England for a year before moving to Abu Dhabi.

I have found MCIS to be an amazing, inclusive and positive environment for staff, students and parents and I am excited to continue my journey teaching here!

Cyrine Joudi

PRIMARY COORDINATOR & GRADE 5A HOMEROOM TEACHER

2 YEARS AT MAPLEWOOD



My name is Ms. Cyrine Joudi, and I am proud to be the Primary Coordinator and 5A Homeroom Teacher at MCIS. As a Canadian educator, I hold a Bachelor of Education as well as a Bachelor of Science in Pharmacology.

My background in both education and science has shaped my passion for creating meaningful and engaging learning experiences for students. What I enjoy most about working at MCIS is the opportunity to work closely with children and support them as they learn, grow, and develop confidence. Most of all, I cherish the warm, welcoming community at MCIS and the wonderful family feeling that makes the school such a special place to be.



Amy-Jo Clare McManaman

MIDDLE SCHOOL COORDINATOR / 4-6 P.E

2 YEARS AT MAPLEWOOD

I am currently the Middle School Coordinator and a Grades 4–6 Physical Education teacher at Maplewood. Originally from Canada, I spent five years teaching internationally in Mexico before moving to the UAE. This is now my second year at Maplewood, and I truly value the strong sense of community within our school.

The kindness, support, and encouragement among staff, combined with the enthusiasm and diversity of our students, make Maplewood a very special place to work. I feel fortunate to be involved across the Primary, Middle, and High School divisions, which allows me to build meaningful relationships with students of different ages and backgrounds while learning about the many cultures represented within our school community.

Aviwe Kitshini

HEAD OF SCIENCE, BIOLOGY TEACHER

6.5 YEARS AT MAPLEWOOD



I'm Miss Aviwe Kitshini, I have an MA Ed in Teaching and Learning and I've been a Biology teacher for over 12 years! (I feel old saying that lol). I came to MCIS in February of 2019, taking on the role of Biology teacher (amongst others), and since last year I have been serving as the Head of Science.

I believe a good education is a gateway to endless opportunities, and every child deserves to be seen and supported in order to realise these and create new ones. I've had the privilege of seeing eight graduating classes go through our doors! What a time it has been!

I love Maplewood for its people more than anything! The community and camaraderie are like nowhere else! I love it here!



Treva Mahmoud

HEAD OF OPTIONS / ACADEMIC ADVISOR

7 YEARS AT MAPLEWOOD

My name is Treva Mahmoud, and I'm the Head of Options and Academic Advisor here at Maplewood Canadian International School. I'm originally from Phoenix, Arizona, but Abu Dhabi has been home for nearly 23 years now. I've had the privilege of being part of the MCIS community for the past seven years, and it's a place with a lovely sense of togetherness.

I love working closely with our high schoolers, helping them think through their academic options and find the paths that are right for them. Every year I get to keep growing and learning right alongside our students and faculty, which is genuinely one of my favorite parts of the job. Outside of school, you'll usually find me traveling or out enjoying some kind of outdoor activity.

Brooke Norstedt

SOCIAL WORKER

FIRST YEAR AT MAPLEWOOD

I'm the School Social Worker at MCIS, supporting students with their wellbeing, relationships, emotional regulation, and any challenges that may be affecting them at school. I work alongside students, families, and staff to help children feel safe, supported, and understood, while also promoting positive social and emotional development.

Before joining MCIS, I worked for many years with children and families in Australia, including in child protection and family support. That experience has given me a strong understanding of the different challenges children can face and the importance of early, practical support.

What I enjoy most about working at MCIS is getting to know the students and being someone they feel comfortable coming to when they need support. I also really enjoy working collaboratively with families and staff to help students feel confident, connected, and able to thrive at school.





Alexandra Parsons

HEAD OF INCLUSION AND SAFEGUARDING

SECOND YEAR AT MAPLEWOOD

I have been an educator for 20 years, including 18 years teaching in Alberta, Canada, before joining Maplewood last year. For the past 15 years, I have specialised in Inclusion, working as a Learning Assistance Coordinator and, more recently, as Head of Inclusion at Maplewood.

I am passionate about creating an inclusive learning environment where every student feels valued, supported, and truly part of our learning community. I believe that strong collaboration between home and school is essential in helping students thrive, and I greatly value the partnerships we build with families.

For me, learning should be fun, meaningful, and engaging for every learner, regardless of their individual strengths or needs. I love that Maplewood embraces this philosophy and strives to create opportunities for all students to learn, grow, and feel a genuine sense of belonging. It is a privilege to be part of such a caring and inclusive community.

Tanya Fourie

HEAD OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION

11TH YEAR AT MAPLEWOOD

I was educated in South Africa and have been fortunate to call the UAE home for the past 18 years. I have a real passion for teaching Physical Education and love seeing children develop not only their physical skills, but also their confidence, character and sense of self.

My teaching philosophy is centred around developing the whole child. I believe PE provides a wonderful opportunity to nurture important character traits, morals and values such as teamwork, respect, resilience, responsibility, perseverance and kindness. My goal is for students to leave my lessons not only as better movers, but as more confident, respectful and well-rounded individuals.

Outside of school, one of my greatest passions is helping animals and promoting animal welfare. I enjoy supporting animals in need and educating others about responsible and compassionate animal welfare practices.

I am also a very big rugby fan and proudly support my home team, the Springboks!

I really enjoy working at MCIS. The students are fantastic, and I feel very fortunate to be part of a school community where, together with my colleagues, we have created a sense of an extended family. It is this strong sense of community, along with the opportunity to make a positive difference in children's lives, that makes my role so rewarding.



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